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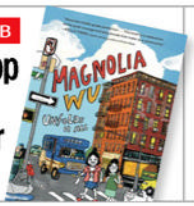
THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

ANIMALS
Wildlife wins and wonders
p8

BOOK CLUB
Our 8 top titles of the year
p19



PUZZLES
Word games to stretch your brain
p26

December 27, 2024/January 3, 2025
Volume 5, Issue 245/246 · $5.99

Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

BEST OF 2024!

A look back at the year's most amazing stories

10 historic moments

Major elections, a solar event, and a restored landmark captivated the US and the world.

Stickers for voters

DID YOU KNOW?
More than 88 million people voted early, either by mail or at a polling site, in this year's election.

Nation chooses leaders

Millions of Americans cast ballots for President and other officials in the national election that ended on November 5. Votes for President were counted through the night, and the race was called at about 5:30 the next morning in favor of former President Donald Trump, a Republican. He defeated the Democratic candidate, Vice President Kamala Harris.

In the Electoral College, the result was 312 for Trump and 226 for Harris. The popular vote came down to a difference of about 2 million ballots—77.2 million for Trump and 74.9 million for Harris. Trump and his Vice Presidential running mate, JD Vance, will be sworn into office on Inauguration Day, January 20, 2025.

Besides winning the Presidency, Republicans took control of Congress (the branch of government that makes laws) by winning the most seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives. When the new session of Congress begins on January 3, Republicans will have 53 senators while Democrats will have 47 senators voting with them. Republicans will have 220 seats to the Democrats' 215 in the House. In a notable win, New Jersey elected the country's first Korean American senator, Democrat Andy Kim.

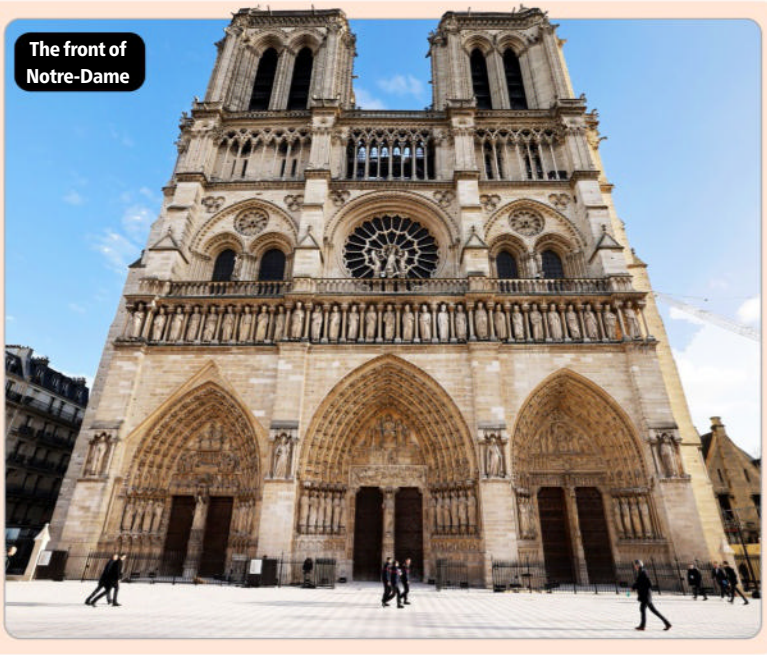
Republicans won eight of the 11 races for governor. With the election of Republican Kelly Ayotte in New Hampshire, 13 women will now serve as governor at the same time, a record. North Carolina elected its first Jewish governor, Democrat Josh Stein.

Notre-Dame Cathedral restored

On December 7 in Paris, France, the historic Notre-Dame Cathedral reopened to the public for the first time since it was severely damaged by a fire in 2019. French President Emmanuel Macron hosted dignitaries from around the world at a ceremony filled with prayer, music, and applause. "The bells of Notre-Dame are ringing again," he said in a speech.

For nearly 900 years, the soaring Catholic church has stood at the center of Paris and served as a symbol of France. The fire, which started in the cathedral's attic, destroyed its famous spire and most of the roof. About 500 firefighters worked to contain the blaze.

The renovation cost nearly $900 million, much of which was donated by people around the world. About 2,000 workers, artists, craftspeople, architects, and engineers worked together to complete the project, using ancient and modern methods and materials. People are now able to make reservations to visit the cathedral. About 15 million visitors are expected in the next year.



The front of Notre-Dame

Broadway musical is a box office sensation

The movie adaptation of the Broadway musical *Wicked* made its premiere in November and quickly became a smash hit. It is the highest-grossing Broadway musical adaptation of all time and has earned more than $520 million worldwide in ticket sales.

Wicked is based on a 1995 novel by Gregory Maguire that tells the origin story of famous characters from the 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz*. The green-skinned Elphaba, played by Cynthia Erivo, has yet to become the Wicked Witch of the West, and Glinda, played by Ariana Grande, has not been named the Good Witch of the South. Instead, they are two student witches at Shiz University who become best friends. The film tells the first part of the musical. *Wicked: For Good* will tell the other half of the story and is set to be released in 2025.

Excitement for *Wicked* extended beyond theaters. More than 70 brands, from Starbucks to Crocs, collaborated with the film. The movie also received critical acclaim, earning four Golden Globe nominations. "I'm so proud of the journey that we've walked to get to this point," Erivo said.

BEHIND THE SCENES
It took about four hours to apply Cynthia Erivo's green makeup each day before filming.

Wicked

Divers examine the coral.

Massive coral reef is discovered

Scientists studying the effects of climate change in the Southern Pacific Ocean found the world's largest coral. The undersea formation, which is located near the Solomon Islands, is so large that it can be seen from space.

The team thought they had spotted a shipwreck, but it was actually a mega coral measuring about 111 feet wide, 104 feet long, and 18 feet high. They were surprised to find that the coral is very healthy. About 77% of the world's coral reefs have faced bleaching (turning white) since early 2023.

Coral is important for a healthy ocean, providing habitat and food for 25% of all marine species. Millions of people worldwide rely on coral for food, income, and protection from storms and floods. The team will study the mega coral, which could help with conservation efforts. The discovery may also help the islands become an official marine protected area.

Young people win climate case

Climate activists ages 9 to 18 reached a groundbreaking legal settlement with Hawaii that will force the state to take environmental action.

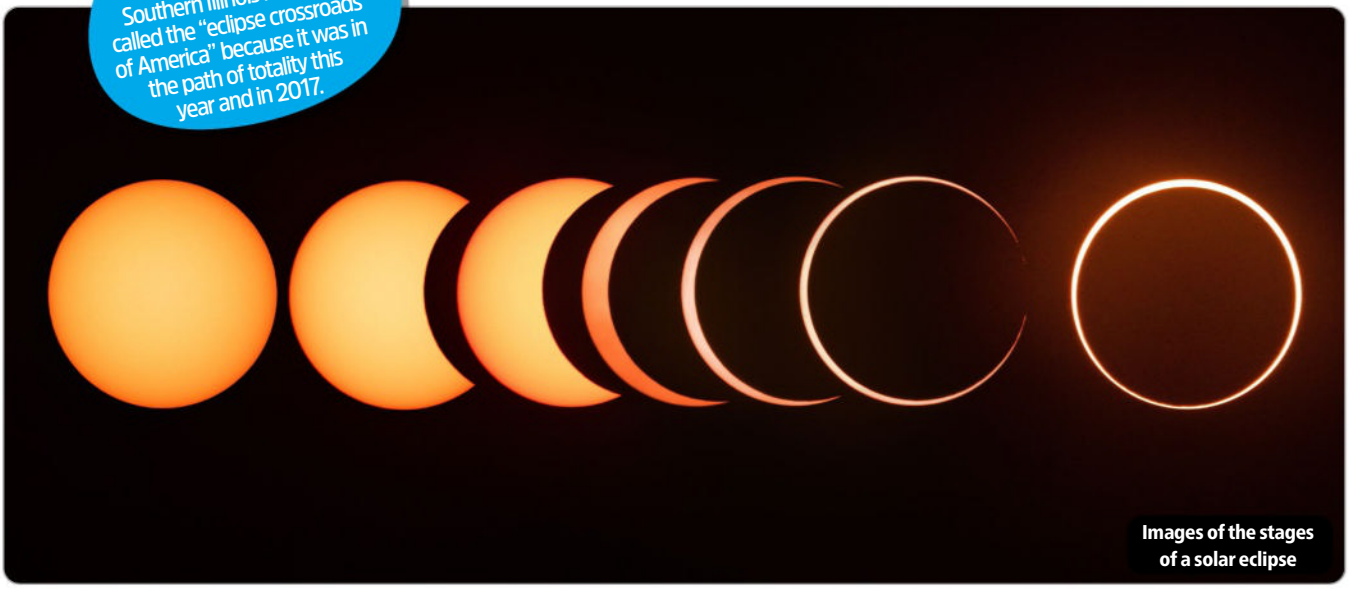
The group of 13 people started the court case in 2022. They said the state had harmed their ability to "live healthful lives in Hawaii" by carrying out projects that are harmful to the environment, like expanding highways, and failing to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (gases that stay in Earth's atmosphere and trap heat).

The court said Hawaii must now make a plan to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions for all state transportation by 2045. This could involve burning less coal, oil, and gas, as well as planting trees to absorb gases from the air. Lucina, a 17-year-old member of the group, said the ruling gave her hope.

The activists who won the case

ON THE COVER: ILLUSTRATIONS BY NEIL DAVIES; GETTY IMAGES (2); ALAMY; SPREAD 1: ON THIS PAGE: UNIVERSAL PICTURES; MANU SAN FELIX; NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PRISTINE SEAS; UH NEWS; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2)

PRIME VIEWING
Southern Illinois has been called the "eclipse crossroads of America" because it was in the path of totality this year and in 2017.



Images of the stages of a solar eclipse

Solar eclipse thrills millions of people

The first total solar eclipse in North America since 2017 occurred on April 8, drawing massive crowds to celebrate the rare event. A total solar eclipse occurs when the Moon moves between the Earth and the Sun and its shadow appears to cover all of the Sun. Fifteen states from Texas to Maine fell within the eclipse's "path of totality," a diagonal track 115 miles wide where the Moon fully blocked the Sun's light. The more than 32 million people living in this path saw darkness for about one to four minutes. In areas outside the path, the sky grew briefly dim before brightening again.

People gathered in parks, sports stadiums, and backyards, with some traveling hundreds of miles to be in the eclipse's path. Cities and towns held events, including concerts and festivals. Stores sold T-shirts and the special glasses that must be worn to view an eclipse safely. The Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indiana drew about 50,000 people from all 50 states to its viewing event. Crowds also gathered in places that had a partial view of the eclipse, such as the National Mall in Washington, DC, New York City rooftops, and Florida beaches.

Crowds cheered, applauded, and stared at the sky in awe. "It's an opportunity to celebrate one star that shines on everyone," Marcel Corchado Albelo, a scientist in Texas, told *The Washington Post*. Sebastian Pelletier, an 11-year-old in Maine, told *The New York Times*, "I would pay a million dollars to see that again."

India has world's largest election

More than 640 million people voted in India, the world's largest democracy and the nation with the biggest population. The election took place in more than 1 million polling places from April 19 to June 1. Some areas were so remote that election officials used boats, camels, elephants, and horses to reach them.

After an unexpectedly close race, Narendra Modi was sworn in for a third term as India's prime minister (PM). In India, voters do not directly elect the PM. Instead, they elect 543 representatives in the Lok Sabha (one half of parliament, similar to the US Congress). The leader of the political party that wins a majority (272 seats) in the Lok Sabha becomes PM.

Modi's political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, was expected to win by a wide margin but instead won 240 seats. That gave them the lead but not a majority. In order to get enough seats and return to office, Modi had to form an alliance with other parties.

Women stand in line to vote in India.

Grand museum in Egypt opens

After nearly 20 years of construction and delays, the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza, Egypt, partially opened on October 16. The largest archaeological museum dedicated to a single civilization contains more than 100,000 artifacts, some of which are at least 700,000 years old.

The museum is as big as 80 football fields and cost nearly $1 billion to build. It was designed to reflect the ancient Pyramids of Giza, which are located about a mile away. The outside of the museum features a pattern of triangles, and the sloping ceilings inside have a pyramid shape. A six-story staircase rises to tall windows with a view of the Giza pyramids.

The museum's highlights include items from the tomb of Tutankhamun, the boy king who ruled from 1333 BCE to 1323 BCE. Once the museum is fully open, the complete collection of 5,000 artifacts from his tomb will be displayed for the first time. Other treasures include a granite sculpture of Queen Nefertiti and a 26-foot-tall statue of Ramses II that is 3,200 years old. Objects showing the lives of everyday Egyptians, like clay statues of workers, are also on display.

Although a full opening date has yet to be set, the museum now has about 4,000 visitors a day in 12 of its galleries. Eventually, it is expected to draw about 5 million visitors each year. Eissa Zidan, a director at the museum, said it is more than a place to see antiquities. "The museum is a gift to all the world," he said.

WOW! The new Grand Egyptian Museum includes conservation labs, gardens, eight restaurants, and a 3D movie theater.

Ancient wooden statues at the museum

Ruth Chepngetich

New marathon record set

Ruth Chepngetich of Kenya set a new women's marathon world record when she took first place at the Chicago Marathon in Illinois on October 13. She finished the 26.2-mile race with a time of 2:09.56, making her the first woman to finish a marathon in less than two hours and 10 minutes and the first to run faster than 12 miles per hour for a marathon.

Chepngetich broke the previous record, set by Ethiopia's Tigst Assefa at the 2023 Berlin Marathon, by nearly two minutes. World Athletics, the global governing body of running, certified her record in December.

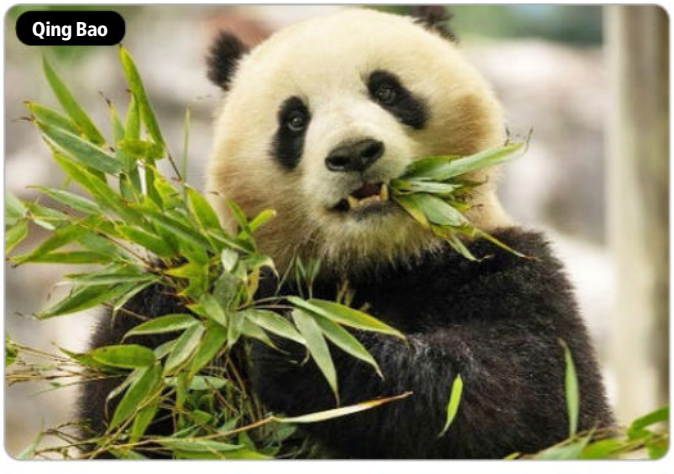
It was Chepngetich's third time winning the Chicago Marathon, a feat no other woman has achieved. She was the event's female champion in 2021 and 2022. She also participated in 2023 and placed second. Moments after the race, Chepngetich told NBC Chicago, "This is my dream that has come true."

Giant pandas return to US zoos

The first pandas to enter the US in more than 20 years arrived at the San Diego Zoo in California in late June and at the National Zoo in Washington, DC, in October. China loaned the pandas to the zoos as part of a larger conservation program known as "panda diplomacy." The species is considered vulnerable to extinction, with fewer than 1,900 living in the wild.

Giant pandas Yun Chuan, a 5-year-old male, and Xin Bao, a 4-year-old female, are living in the San Diego Zoo's new Panda Ridge habitat. They made their public debut in August. Yun Chuan loves "climbing trees," zoo staff said, while Xin Bao can be recognized by her "large, round face and big, fluffy ears."

The National Zoo is preparing its giant pandas Bao Li, a male, and Qing Bao, a female, for their public debut in January 2025. Staff said they are helping the 3-year-olds adjust to their new home by introducing them to the zoo's daily routines and habitat areas.



Qing Bao

ON THIS PAGE: AP; GETTY IMAGES; ROSHAN PATEL, SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL ZOO AND CONSERVATION BIOLOGY INSTITUTE; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2)

10 people who made

WINNING WORD
"Abseil," a mountaineering descent using a rope looped over a higher point, is the word Bruhat Soma spelled correctly to win the bee.

"No matter if we were born as women or men, we can realize our dreams and desires, without our sex determining our destiny."

SPORTS HISTORY
Major League Soccer was formed in 1993 and showcases the top level of soccer competition in North America.

"Thanks for letting me spend so much time in your eardrums."

ANCIENT ORIGINS
Soap is believed to date back to about 2800 BCE, when animal fats were mixed with ash and water for cleaning.

Bruhat Soma

On May 30, Bruhat Soma, a 12-year-old from Florida, won the 96th annual Scripps National Spelling Bee, which took place in Maryland. This was Soma's third time competing in the bee. In 2022, he tied for 163rd place, and last year he tied for 74th place. This year, he went through 14 rounds, the last of which was a tie-breaking spell-off. After correctly spelling 29 extra words, he achieved victory. He won $50,000, among other prizes. "It's been my goal this past year to win, and I've been working really hard," Soma said after the competition. "It's like a dream come true."

Claudia Sheinbaum

It was a big year for Claudia Sheinbaum, who was sworn in as Mexico's first female and first Jewish president on October 1. Sheinbaum, age 62, has a PhD in energy engineering and was part of a team that received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for their environmental work. In 2018, she became the first woman to be elected mayor of Mexico City. She won the presidency in June with more than 60% of the vote, and during her six-year term in office, she plans to focus on poverty reduction, justice reform, immigration, and relations between Mexico and the US.

Cavan Sullivan

At the age of 14, Cavan Sullivan became the youngest athlete to play in a Major League Soccer match. On July 17, he debuted as a substitute for the Philadelphia Union in the final minutes of their victory over the New England Revolution. Soccer runs in Sullivan's family: His parents both played at the University of Pennsylvania, and his older brother, Quinn, also plays for the Union. After his first match, Sullivan, who turned 15 in September, said of the moment, "I'm really, really happy to have done this."

Sabrina Carpenter

Pop singer-songwriter Sabrina Carpenter, age 25, made major music news in 2024. In April, she released "Espresso," which became her first song to exceed 1 billion streams on Spotify and went on to be the platform's most-streamed song in the world this year. In August, Carpenter's album, *Short n' Sweet*, debuted at number one. In October, she became the first artist in this decade to have three songs in the top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100 for eight consecutive weeks, with hits from *Short n' Sweet*: "Espresso," "Taste," and "Please, Please, Please."

Heman Bekele

One of science's brightest young minds is Heman Bekele, age 15, from Virginia. He was named *Time* magazine's 2024 Kid of the Year for his groundbreaking invention of a bar soap that can fight skin cancer. He was inspired by his childhood in Ethiopia, where he saw people working long hours under the sun. Bekele's soap can release cancer-fighting medicine that stays on after washing. This year, he also won the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, earning $10,000 for his work. His advice to aspiring inventors: "Keep thinking of new ways to improve our world."

GETTY IMAGES (8); 3M/DISCOVERY EDUCATION; NASA/JSC

big headlines in 2024

Tatyana McFadden

During this summer's Paralympic Games, seven-time Paralympian Tatyana McFadden, age 35, became the most decorated American track and field athlete of all time. McFadden, who has spina bifida (a birth defect that affects the spine), competes in wheelchair racing. At the Games, she was a Team USA captain and earned a silver and a bronze medal, bringing her total to 22 medals across six Paralympics. In the past, McFadden has won 24 major marathon titles and set five world records.

Dave Eggers

Acclaimed author Dave Eggers, age 54, began and ended the year with special moments in the world of children's literature. In January, he won the prestigious John Newbery Medal for his middle-grade book *The Eyes and the Impossible*. As part of Eggers' passionate efforts to support young writers, he recently opened the International Library of Youth Writing in San Francisco, California. It is located next to the youth writing center Eggers founded 22 years ago and showcases works written by young people ages 6 to 18 from around the world.

Sunita Williams

NASA astronaut Sunita "Suni" Williams has been a model of leadership and adaptability this year. In June, she went on an eight-day mission to the International Space Station (ISS) with fellow astronaut Butch Wilmore to test Boeing's Starliner spacecraft. Due to problems with the spacecraft, however, their stay was extended to eight months. Williams, age took over as ISS commander in September. She has now logged more than 511 days in space across several missions, making her one of NASA's most experienced astronauts. Williams is set to return to Earth in February 2025.

Ruth Gottesman

In February, Ruth Gottesman, age 93, made a $1 billion donation to the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City. It is believed to be the largest gift ever made to a US medical school and ensures that students can now attend tuition-free. Gottesman has been connected to the institution for 55 years, first as a pediatrics professor and now as chair of the board of trustees. Her hope is that the donation will inspire people who thought they could not afford to attend medical school to apply. She said she felt "blessed" to be able to give "to such a worthy cause."

Snoop Dogg

Hip-hop icon Snoop Dogg became a breakout TV star this year. He served as a special correspondent for NBC's coverage of the Paris Olympics. There, he cheered on Team USA at events (even dressing in equestrian gear to support horseback riders), interviewed American athletes, and hosted segments with journalist Mike Tirico—all with his signature brand of cool commentary. NBC's executive producer called him an "ambassador of happiness." This fall, Snoop Dogg joined *The Voice* as a judge for season 26 and became a fan favorite.

Nature's top stories

Conservation wins brought new hope, and cute creatures made the world smile.

HAPPY SOUND
Thanks to a set of bones called the hyoid, lynx can purr like a housecat.

An Iberian lynx

Lynx species is saved

The Iberian lynx, a medium-sized wildcat, has made a comeback from near-extinction. Found throughout the mountainous Iberian Peninsula in Europe, this lynx was once considered the world's most endangered feline.

During the 1900s, the Iberian lynx population declined due to loss of land, human activity, and the disappearance of the cat's primary food source, the European rabbit. By 2001, there were 62 adult lynx living in the wild. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classified the Iberian lynx as critically endangered in 2002, and several conservation groups came together to save the species. Their efforts included restoring crucial habitats, breeding lynx in captivity, preventing lynx deaths, and raising the European rabbit population. Teams also reintroduced more than 400 lynx to the Iberian Peninsula.

Now scientists are seeing the results of their work. Today more than 2,000 lynx are living in the wild in Spain and Portugal. The IUCN has upgraded the Iberian lynx's classification to "vulnerable," which means the species' population has increased significantly but still needs to be protected. Francisco Javier Salcedo Ortiz, who coordinated some of the efforts, said this was "the greatest recovery of a cat species ever achieved through conservation."

Tiny hippo is big star

Moo Deng, a baby pygmy hippopotamus, has become a global internet sensation. Born on July 10 at Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand, Moo Deng became famous when keepers shared photos and videos of her antics online. People related to the calf's expressive behavior, like yawning and screaming. By October, Moo Deng had about 3 million followers and 125 million likes on TikTok, and her explosive popularity led to a 30% increase in visitors to the zoo.

Moo Deng's fame has drawn attention to her species, which is endangered. About 2,000 to 3,000 pygmy hippos live in the wild, mostly in West African swamps and rivers. "I hope that the cuteness of Moo Deng will raise awareness for people to come and learn about the species," said zookeeper Atthapon Nundee.

Moo Deng

Fat bear defends her crown

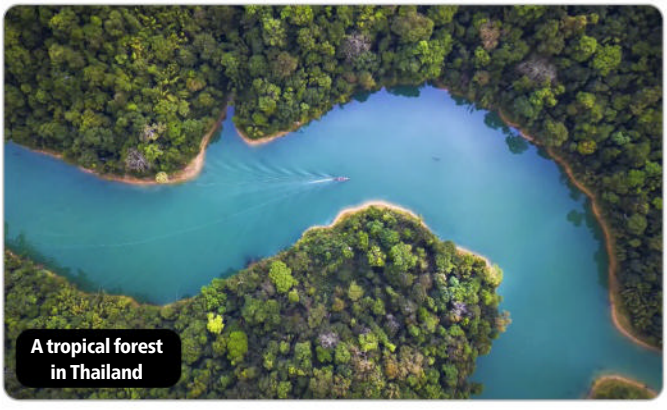
The champion of Fat Bear Week, an annual contest in Katmai National Park in Alaska, was announced on October 9. The park holds the competition to celebrate its brown bears as they gain weight before hibernation (deep sleep in winter). People vote online for their favorite bears. For the second year in a row, the winner was 128 "Grazer," a 19-year-old female bear. In the final round she beat 32 "Chunk" by more than 40,000 votes. Grazer is the first bear to win the contest while caring for a cub. Fat Bear Week creator Mike Fitz said her ability to protect her cubs was very much admired.

Insects return in rare event

Trillions of cicadas emerged from the ground in several US states this summer, a historic year for the creatures. Cicadas, cricket-like insects that are harmless to humans, live underground until they emerge to mate. Most species of cicadas appear above ground every summer, but seven species in North America stay underground for either 13 or 17 years. Large groups that emerge together are called broods.

In 2024, a 13-year brood, Brood XIX, and a 17-year brood, Brood XIII, emerged at the same time. It was the largest number of cicadas to emerge in the US in decades. This year was also unusual because the two broods emerged close to each other, appearing in a range of states that overlapped in Illinois and Iowa. After several weeks, new nymphs (young) hatched and burrowed underground, and the cycle began again.

A cicada


A tropical forest in Thailand

Key rainforest trees identified

Half of all tropical forests in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the South American Amazon are dominated by a surprisingly small number of tree species, a study found.

Tropical forests are among the most diverse habitats on the planet, with 800 billion trees and two thirds of the world's species of living things. However, the study found that 1,053 species account for 50% of all the trees in these forests. About 46,000 species make up the other half.

Now that experts have discovered the makeup of Earth's major tropical forests, they will be able to direct future research more wisely. "If we focus on understanding the [most common] tree species, we can probably predict how the whole forest will respond to today's rapid environmental changes," said lead author Declan Cooper.

Rats taught to take selfies

French artist and photographer Augustin Lignier taught a pair of rats to take selfies as part of an art project. Lignier bought two rats from a pet store and placed them in a tall, transparent tower with a camera attached to it. When a rat pressed a button, the camera took a picture of the rat and the animal received a bit of sugar as a reward. Each photo was displayed on a screen in front of the rats. But when Lignier changed the device setup so it would not always release sugar on command, the rats kept snapping pictures. Sometimes they received sugar but ignored it to keep pushing the button. Lignier said the excitement of pressing the button had become its own sort of reward.

A rat snaps a photo.

ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES (2); AUGUSTIN LIGNIER; ON LEFT PAGE: ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES

Stunning breakthroughs

Bold discoveries revealed the past and will shape the future and save lives.

WOW! Jupiter, the largest planet in our solar system, is twice the size of all the other planets combined.

A rendering of Jupiter

Jupiter moon mission begins

On October 14, NASA (the US space agency) launched Europa Clipper, the largest spacecraft it has ever built to travel to another planet. The uncrewed spacecraft is on an ambitious 10-year mission to search for evidence that life could exist on Europa, one of Jupiter's moons. That evidence could include water and the element carbon.

Europa is covered in an icy shell 10 miles deep, and scientists believe there is a salty ocean beneath it. Equipment aboard Europa Clipper will map the surface, examine the ice and any water, and assess the moon's elements, gases, temperature, gravity, and magnetic field. This data could also help NASA identify the best places to land in the future.

Shortly after the launch, Europa Clipper deployed its solar panels, which provide power. When they're open, the spacecraft is nearly 100 feet across. Next, Europa Clipper will orbit the Sun, fly past Mars in February 2025, and loop back around Earth in December 2026 to gain speed from the planets' gravity. It will then fly toward Jupiter like a rock from a slingshot, covering 1.8 billion miles in 5.5 years. Once the spacecraft enters Jupiter's orbit in April 2030, it will fly past Europa 49 times in four years, coming as close as 16 miles to the surface.

Bill Nelson, the head of NASA, said of the Europa Clipper mission, "Our next chapter in space exploration has begun."

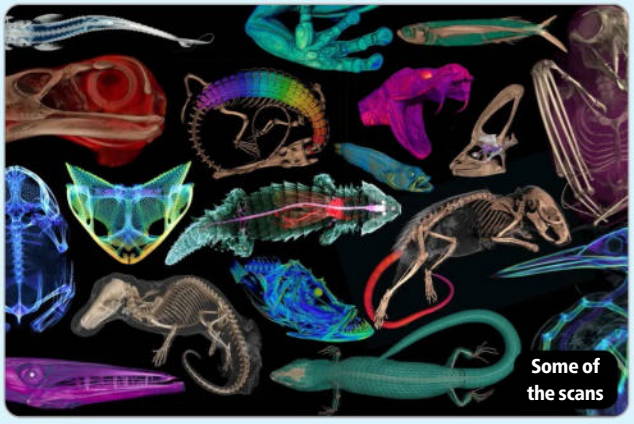
Kids find young T. rex

It was announced this year that three boys on a hike in North Dakota in 2022 found the rare fossil of a young Tyrannosaurus rex. Jessin and Liam Fisher, then ages 10 and 7, were with their dad, Sam, and their cousin Kaiden Madsen, then age 9. The kids saw a large bone poking out of the dirt.

They contacted a paleontologist (scientist who studies fossils) at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in Colorado, who invited the boys to dig it up with his team. A huge chunk of rock containing the dinosaur's leg, hip, skull, jaw, teeth, and other bones was carried by helicopter and trailer truck to the museum. Experts identified it as a teenage T. rex that lived about 67 million years ago. There are only about four like it in the world.

When asked if he had advice for other kids, Jessin, who wants to be a paleontologist, said, "If you...just go out hiking, you'll find something."

The boys with their family and the rock containing the fossils


Some of the scans

Database of 3D animal scans

A database of 3D scans has made detailed views of animals' skeletons, skin, muscles, and other organs available to the public. Called openVertebrate, it contains more than 13,000 images of vertebrates (animals with a backbone). The digital models were created with CT scans. Small animals like reptiles and fish were easy to scan, but scientists had to take apart a giant humpback whale's skeleton and scan each bone separately. A scan of a rim rock crowned snake shows that it died while eating a giant centipede, while another reveals bony plates covering a mouse's tail.

Robot walks on Great Wall

A robot called XBot-L was the first humanlike machine to walk on the Great Wall of China. The wall was built between the 3rd century BCE and the 17th century CE and winds about 13,000 miles across China.

XBot-L is about 5 feet, 4 inches tall and, unlike most robots, can navigate unpredictable terrain and low-lit areas. It has reinforcement learning technology, which helps it instantly make decisions as it encounters challenges. Like a human, the robot can adjust its gait or position without losing balance or falling down.

In a video, XBot-L walked smoothly over the rough stones of the Great Wall. The robot climbed uneven steps and moved through darkened passageways.

XBot-L on the Great Wall of China

Neffy is easy to administer.

DID YOU KNOW?
More than 33 million Americans are allergic to certain foods, medicines, or insect bites.

Allergy nasal spray could save lives

A nasal spray called Neffy is the first needle-free treatment for severe allergic reactions to food and other triggers. Reactions can occur within seconds. In rare cases, they can become a life-threatening response called anaphylaxis.

The only treatment for anaphylaxis has been an injection of a medicine called epinephrine. The dose often has to be given by the patient or someone nearby, like a parent. That can be scary for people who are afraid of needles, which studies have found includes most children and up to 30% of young adults. Many people choose to visit a hospital emergency room instead, causing them to lose precious time.

Neffy contains epinephrine and requires a single spray into the nose. The scientists who created it said it is less frightening in an emergency, making people more likely to use it.

Coin tosses are not 50/50

When you flip a coin, it does not have an equal chance of coming up heads or tails, scientists found. They had people toss 46 different kinds of coins 350,757 times. The coins landed on the same side they started with 51% of the time. That means that a coin that was heads-up before the flip was more likely to land heads-up. The scientists think that's because a person's thumb makes the coin wobble, causing it to have one side up more than the other. Everyone's thumb is different, which makes the results vary. The 1% difference doesn't seem like much but could have a big impact on coin-toss decisions, like which team gets the kickoff in football.

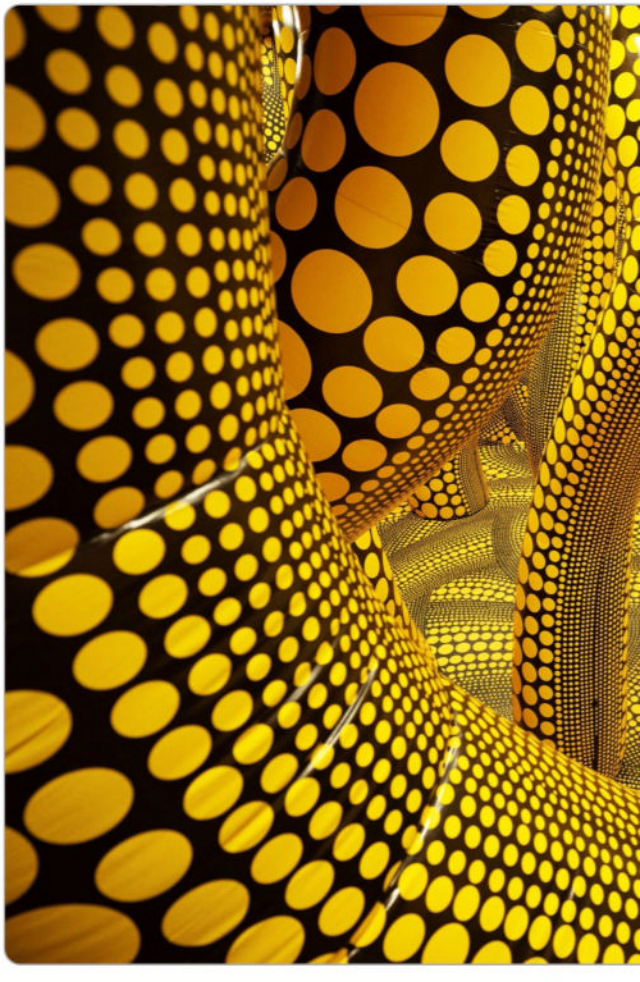
People's thumbs affect their coin tosses.

OPENVERTEBRATE; ROBOT ERA; ARS PHARMA; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES; DR. TYLER R. LYSON

Photos of the year

Defying gravity
This photo of Gabriel Medina of Brazil, taken after he set an Olympic record in surfing, has been called one of the most iconic images of the Paris Games.

I see you
A parakeet in Turkey peeks out from a tree.

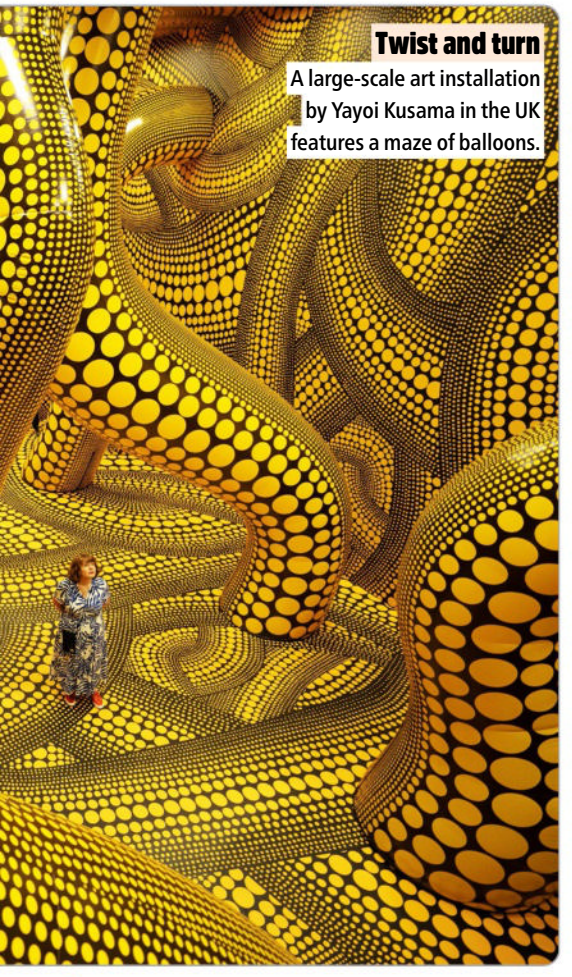


GETTY IMAGES (6)

Photos of the year

Bubbles of fun
Kindergartners in China celebrate International Children's Day.

Colorful costume
A child participates in a Caribbean carnival in the UK.



Twist and turn
A large-scale art installation by Yayoi Kusama in the UK features a maze of balloons.

Standing tall
Team members form a "castell," or human tower, during an exhibition in Mexico.

Amazing athletes

Incredible victories and historic performances gave crowds many reasons to cheer.

Team USA shines at Paris Games

Over the summer, athletes gathered in Paris, France, for the Olympics (July 26 to August 11) and the Paralympics (August 28 to September 8).

At the Olympics, the US won 126 medals, the most of any team. Gold medalists included the women's gymnastics and soccer teams and the men's and women's basketball teams. One track star was Noah Lyles, who won gold in the 100-meter race by .005 of a second. He was the first American in 20 years to win in that event. In the pool, swimmer Katie Ledecky added two golds, a silver, and a bronze to her career collection, which made her the most-decorated US female Olympian in history.

At the Paralympics, for athletes with physical, visual, or intellectual impairments, Team USA won 105 medals. Standouts included para cycling double gold medalist Oksana Masters; archer Matt Stutzman, who rose from19th place to win his event; and the men's wheelchair basketball team, which won a historic third consecutive gold.

Popularity of women's hoops explodes

In 2024, the WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) had its highest attendance in 22 years and its most viewers in 24 years. One of the players responsible for the surge was Indiana Fever rookie Caitlin Clark. The former University of Iowa star was the number one pick in the WNBA Draft, set a WNBA record for assists in a season, and won the Rookie of the Year award. Among the other players who helped boost interest were Chicago Sky rookie Angel Reese, who set a league record for the most rebounds in a season; A'ja Wilson of the Las Vegas Aces, the league's MVP (Most Valuable Player); and Minnesota Lynx star Napheesa Collier, the Defensive Player of the Year.

In March, while Clark was in her final season at Iowa, she broke the record for the most points scored by an NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Division I basketball player, male or female. She led her team to the NCAA tournament final, where they faced the undefeated University of South Carolina—who were the eventual champions. The game drew more viewers than any women's college basketball game in history. Not only that, but for the first time ever, more people watched the women's championship final than the men's final.

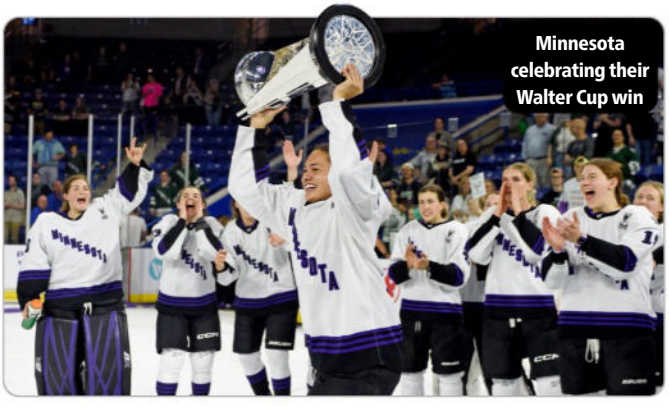
Bronny (left) and LeBron James

NBA legend and son team up

On opening night of the 2024–25 NBA (National Basketball Association) season, Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James and his son, rookie Bronny, became the first father-son duo to share the court in an NBA game. LeBron, who turns 40 on December 30, was in his team's starting lineup, and Bronny, age 20, began on the bench. In the second quarter, after LeBron had been sitting out for a break, they checked in together and played for about two and a half minutes. LeBron called the check-in "a moment I'm never going to forget." To strengthen his skills, Bronny now plays for the Lakers and in the NBA G League, a minor league.

PWHL has successful debut

On January 1, the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL), which includes six North America–based teams and many of the world's best players, kicked off its first season. The popularity of the PWHL was made clear in April, when a game between Montreal and Toronto attracted a crowd of 21,105, a record for women's hockey. The season concluded in May with an exciting championship series in which Minnesota beat Boston to win the Walter Cup trophy. In November, the PWHL teams returned to the ice for their second season—and with new official names: the Boston Fleet, Minnesota Frost, Montreal Victoire, New York Sirens, Ottawa Charge, and Toronto Sceptres. In December, all the teams were added to the video game NHL 25.


Minnesota celebrating their Walter Cup win

DID YOU KNOW?
Cricket was first played in England in at least 1611 and possibly centuries before that.

Andries Gous of Team USA

US cricket players wow at World Cup

The T20 Cricket World Cup, a major competition for top international cricket teams, took place in June. The US was one of the host countries, so Team USA—ranked 18th in the world—earned one of the 20 spots in the tournament and ended up having a thrilling run. Before being eliminated in the second round, the team won their first two group stage matches, including a shocking upset victory over sixth-ranked Pakistan. It was the most significant victory in the US team's history and came down to a type of tie-breaker that is similar to a shootout in other sports. Captain Monank Patel, who was named Player of the Match, said the team had "an unbelievable performance" and called it "a big day for Team USA and the USA cricket community too."

Impressive baseball stars

When the Los Angeles Dodgers and the New York Yankees met in Major League Baseball's World Series in October, it featured a matchup between two players who had historically great seasons: the Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani and the Yankees' Aaron Judge. In September, Ohtani became the first player in MLB history to hit at least 50 home runs and steal at least 50 bases in a season. Judge, meanwhile, hit 58 home runs during the season, the most in the league. Ohtani and the Dodgers won the World Series, and Ohtani was later named the National League's Most Valuable Player (MVP). Judge was the American League MVP—and both players earned their awards by unanimous decisions (all voters in agreement).

A new pitching star also emerged in the 2024 season. Paul Skenes of the Pittsburgh Pirates, the top overall pick in the 2023 MLB Draft, had a sensational first season. He threw 170 strikeouts and was the National League's starting pitcher in the MLB All-Star Game, a top honor for a player in that position. At the end of the season, he was named the National League Rookie of the Year.

Shohei Ohtani

Aaron Judge

Paul Skenes

GETTY IMAGES

Pop culture excitement

Memorable characters, books brought to life, a soaring film, and new music delighted fans.

Inside Out 2

Inside Out 2 makes history

A film about emotions got people very excited to go to the movies this summer. *Inside Out 2*, the long-awaited sequel to Pixar's 2015 hit *Inside Out*, was released in June, surpassed the $1 billion mark in 19 days, and eventually became the highest-grossing film of the year—not to mention the highest-grossing animated film of all time.

Inside Out 2 follows 13-year-old Riley as she navigates the emotional challenges of growing up. The sequel introduced new emotions—Anxiety, Embarrassment, Ennui, and Envy—who disrupt the balance of Riley's core feelings: Joy, Sadness, Disgust, Fear, and Anger. The film was praised by critics, fans, and mental health professionals for its sensitive portrayal of adolescence.

Interest in the world of *Inside Out 2* wasn't limited to the big screen. In July, the vacation rental company Airbnb offered stays at a location in Las Vegas, Nevada, called Headquarters, which featured rooms based on the film. As Halloween approached, five of the top 25 trending costume searches on Google were *Inside Out 2* emotions.

Kensington Tallman, now age 16, voiced Riley and told *The Week Junior* she appreciated how both *Inside Out* films "give a face to emotions." She also said she hoped *Inside Out 2* would show kids they are not alone. "These emotions are real, they're valid, and this is natural," she said.

Fun museum for books

The Rabbit hOle, an immersive museum celebrating children's books, opened in March in North Kansas City, Missouri. It has more than 30 exhibits featuring characters and scenes from beloved stories that are an important part of the history of American children's literature. Illustrations brought to life include the great green room from *Goodnight Moon* and the city from the cover of *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, plus characters such as Madeline and the *Caps for Sale* peddler. Along with the exhibits, the Rabbit hOle has a bookstore, print shop, story lab, and maker space. Spokesperson Emily Hane told *The Week Junior* the overall hope is that visitors to the museum "will be inspired to pick up, share, and read a book and to appreciate the artistry and culture of children's literature."

The Rabbit hOle

SYMBOLIC SHADES
The official colors of the US Navy are blue and gold.

The Blue Angels

A salute to the Blue Angels

In the awe-inspiring documentary *The Blue Angels*, viewers got a close-up view of life as a pilot in the Blue Angels, the US Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron. Cameras on the inside and outside of their jets, plus shots from a helicopter, revealed what it's like to reach speeds of about 700 miles per hour, fly upside down, and create the Blue Angels' signature formations. Greg Wooldridge, a former Blue Angels pilot and one of the documentary's executive producers, told *The Week Junior* he hoped young people walked away from the film "with respect for what's hard, imagining what they might be able to do."

The Outsiders

Beloved novel goes to Broadway

Middle and high school students have been reading S.E. Hinton's novel *The Outsiders* for decades, and now her story about teens in 1967 Oklahoma is a hit in the theater world. A Broadway musical based on the book opened in April and went on to win four Tony Awards, including one for best new musical.

The Outsiders follows best friends Ponyboy Curtis and Johnny Cade, who are struggling to find their place in the world. Sky Lakota-Lynch, who plays Johnny, told *The Week Junior* he hopes audience members, no matter their age or where they are from, will relate to the characters' struggles. Everyone has felt like an outsider, he said, adding that there is a lesson in that: "Take it easy on those who are different from you. You never know what someone is going through."

Beyoncé becomes a country star

In February, Beyoncé, one of the world's most successful pop and R&B stars, surprised the world by revealing she had made an album of country songs, titled *Cowboy Carter*. She previewed it with the release of two singles, including "Texas Hold 'Em," which hit number one on the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart and made her the first Black female artist to ever hold that spot.

When the album came out in March, it broke streaming records on Spotify and Amazon Music. It also attracted new fans to the country genre: According to Spotify, 36 million users who played *Cowboy Carter* had never streamed country music on the app before.

Beyoncé, who grew up in Houston, Texas, said that with the 27-track album, she wanted to explore country music history and honor Black artists' contributions to it. "My hope is that years from now, the mention of an artist's race, as it relates to releasing genres of music, will be irrelevant," she said.

Beyoncé

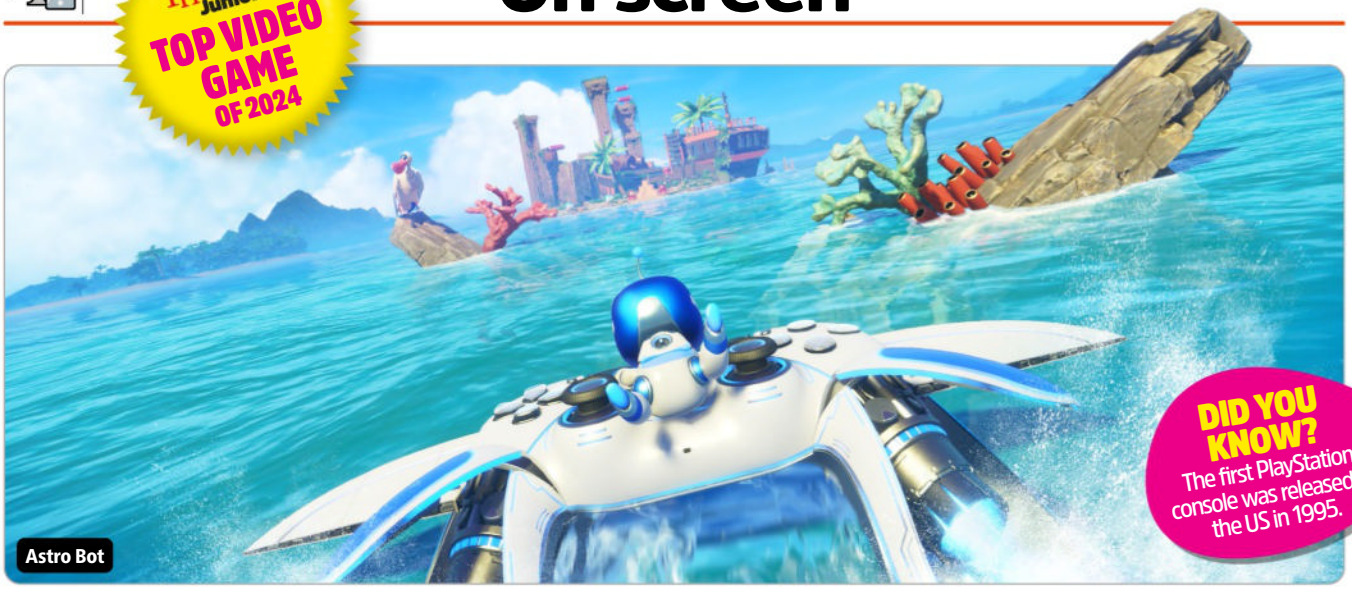
More representation on screen

This fall, a new series and a film brought characters to TV that help promote acceptance and understanding of people with diverse needs. *Carl the Collector* on PBS Kids is about a warm-hearted young raccoon with autism, a social communication disorder, while the Disney+ film *Out of My Mind* (based on a book by Sharon M. Draper) centered on Melody, a tween with cerebral palsy. She is unable to talk or write, and finally gets a chance to show the world how smart she is. Zachariah OHora, who created *Carl*, told *The Week Junior*, "If kids are exposed at a younger age to the whole spectrum of humanity, it's going to be better for everybody."

Carl the Collector

AMAZON MGM STUDIOS; PARAMOUNT ENTERTAINMENT/COLUMBIA RECORDS; MATTHEW MURPHY; FUZZYTOWN PRODUCTIONS, LLC; ON LEFT PAGE: DISNEY/PIXAR; COURTESY OF THE RABBIT HOLE

THE WEEK Junior TOP VIDEO GAME OF 2024



DID YOU KNOW? The first PlayStation console was released in the US in 1995.

An adventure that thrilled gamers

Astro Bot is a platformer adventure game that came out in September exclusively for the PlayStation 5. After it was released, it was the highest-rated game of 2024, and by November, 1.5 million copies had been sold, an impressive figure for a game available on only one platform.

The game stars the character Astro, a PlayStation mascot, and it is the third in a space-set series. Astro first appeared in a set of minigames released in 2013. The first standalone game, Astro's Rescue Mission, was released for PlayStation VR in 2018. A sequel, Astro's Playroom, was released in 2020.

Astro Bot combines the best aspects of the franchise and includes exciting gameplay, creative new worlds, and tributes to 30 years of other PlayStation classics. The adventure begins with Astro and other characters traveling in a flying PS5. When it is attacked, more than 300 Bots are scattered across space. Among the missing ones are 150 "VIPs" that are inspired by characters from other PlayStation games. Astro sets off to rescue them on a Dual Speeder, which looks like a PS5 controller.

The action takes place across 80 levels, 50 planets, and six galaxies. In addition to the usual movement and fighting controls, Astro can use 15 other fun features to defeat enemies and clear levels. For example, a sponge power lets the robot suck up water and get huge; Handy-D, a monkey, gives Astro the power to swing, climb, and slam; and Barkster the Bulldog sends Astro smashing through enemies. Overall, the gameplay is fast and exciting and similar to an action-packed Super Mario game—but with robots.

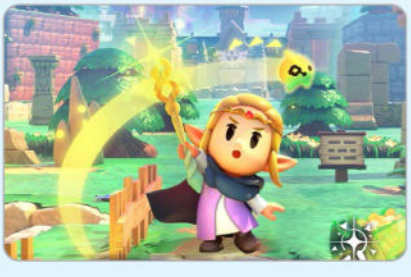
Astro Bot was nominated for seven Game Awards (a top honor), and won four of them: Game of the Year, Best Action/Adventure Game, Best Family Game, and Best Game Direction. Team Asobi, which created Astro Bot, also won a 2024 Golden Joystick Award, another gaming award, for Studio of the Year.

RUNNER-UP GAMES OF THE YEAR

PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR

Nintendo Switch

Mario and his pals are 2D and paper-thin in this role-playing adventure. Part of the fun as they race Bowser on a hunt for special stars is that the flat characters can fold into a paper airplane and boat, slide between cracks, and roll down pipes.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ECHOES OF WISDOM

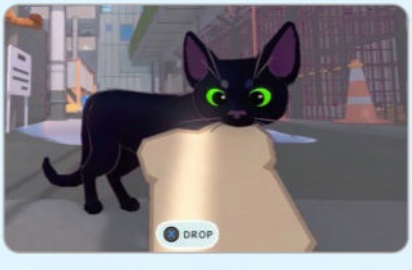
Nintendo Switch

This action-adventure game is the first in the Zelda series to feature Princess Zelda as the main playable character. With a fairy friend and a magical rod, she sets off on a journey to figure out what is causing mysterious openings in Hyrule.

LITTLE KITTY, BIG CITY

Nintendo Switch, Xbox systems, and PC

Learn how fun it is to be a cat in this adventure simulation game. Your goal is to guide the kitty to its home—and find fish to eat along the way—but you can easily keep yourself entertained just by making the cat pounce, push things with its paws, and meow at passers-by.

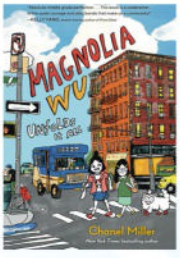


SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT; NINTENDO (2); DOUBLE DAGGER STUDIO

Terrific reads this year

THE WEEK Junior BEST BOOKS OF 2024

There were so many great books released for kids in 2024! Out of all the titles *The Week Junior* reviewed, these eight selections stood out for their spectacular characters, exciting plots, and captivating writing. They're page-turners you won't want to put down!



Best Adventure
Magnolia Wu Unfolds It All
By Chanel Miller (Philomel Books)

As charming as it is insightful, this illustrated novel features a 10-year-old Chinese American girl who reunites socks that were left behind at her parents' laundromat with their owners. As she travels around New York City working as a "sock detective," she shows her new friend from California many landmarks and sites. The girls experience challenges, especially when racism affects both of their families. After reading this story, you'll never look at socks the same way again! *Ages 7–11*

Best Mystery
The Sherlock Society
By James Ponti (Aladdin)

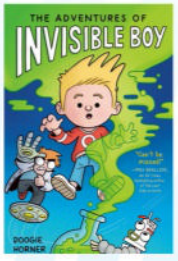
This mystery, the first in a series, stands out for its real-life cases and relatable characters. A brother and sister, plus two friends, hope to continue an investigation of missing treasure that the siblings found in the files of their grandfather, who used to be a newspaper reporter. Just when they think they're closing in on the treasure, a discovery takes them in an unexpected direction. Thanks to the descriptions of the Florida setting, you'll feel like you're sleuthing along with the characters. *Ages 8–12*

Best Series Conclusion
The One and Only Family
By Katherine Applegate (HarperCollins)

The four-book series that began with the Newbery Award–winning *The One and Only Ivan* comes to a satisfying conclusion with this story. Ivan, the gorilla who spent many years in a cage at a shopping mall, is now a father of twins. While his family is safe at a wildlife sanctuary, he grapples with his past and wonders what it would be like to live in the wild again. Endearing and introspective, this beautifully written book practically flies by! *Ages 8–12*

Best Fantasy
The Secret Library
By Kekla Magoon (Candlewick Press)

In this story, an 11-year-old desperate for adventure explores her family's secretive past by time-traveling through books she finds in a magical library. She has encounters with her mom, dad, and grandfather when they were younger, as well as ancestors, including pirates, from centuries ago. What she discovers about her roots will change her life forever. It will also make you think about the progress made toward ending discrimination and the work that still needs to be done today. *Ages 10 and up*



Best Graphic Novel
The Adventures of Invisible Boy
By Doogie Horner
(G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers)

The kickoff to a hilarious new graphic novel series starts at a science fair. Stanley, who is the new boy in school, accidentally bumps into a classmate's potion that can make grape juice stains disappear. The problem? The potion turns Stanley invisible! Can the classmate reverse the potion before it's too late and Stanley becomes permanently invisible? Incredible dialogue makes this story a winner. *Ages 8–12*

Best Novel in Verse
And Then, Boom!
By Lisa Fipps (Nancy Paulsen Books)

This heartfelt, poetic story about a sixth-grader who has faced poverty and homelessness demonstrates the power of kindness. Joe, who loves comic books, notices that superheroes have "and then, boom!" moments when everything goes wrong, but their situations turn out OK in the end. Although Joe's circumstances are looking up for a while, an unexpected tragedy shatters his world. Humor and a joyful ending lighten the mood of this riveting story. *Ages 10 and up*

Best Realistic Fiction
Finally Heard
By Kelly Yang (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers)

When Lina's mom begins posting videos on social media about the family business, sales increase. Lina, age 10, is given a smartphone, and at first she's thrilled to have it because so many of her friends have one. Maybe she'll even create a viral post! But soon she starts to feel pressure from scrolling through social media. Can she break free from it? This novel, the companion book to *Finally Seen*, brilliantly navigates the pros and cons of social media within a friendship story. *Ages 8–12*

Best Nonfiction
Barracoon: Adapted for Young Readers
By Zora Neale Hurston, adapted by Ibram X. Kendi, illustrated by Jazzmen Lee-Johnson (Amistad Books for Young Readers)

This powerful book tells the story of Cudjo Lewis (1841–1935), the last known survivor of the transatlantic slave trade. He was illegally taken from his village in Africa and held in bondage on a ship to Alabama. Through Lewis' own words, this adaptation shows what life was like aboard the ship and the racism Lewis faced even after he was freed. *Ages 8 and up*

BOOKS: COURTESY THE PUBLISHERS

Make kids' favorite recipes

Check out the drink, lunch, snack, and dessert our readers loved best in 2024.

CREAMY ORANGE SMOOTHIE

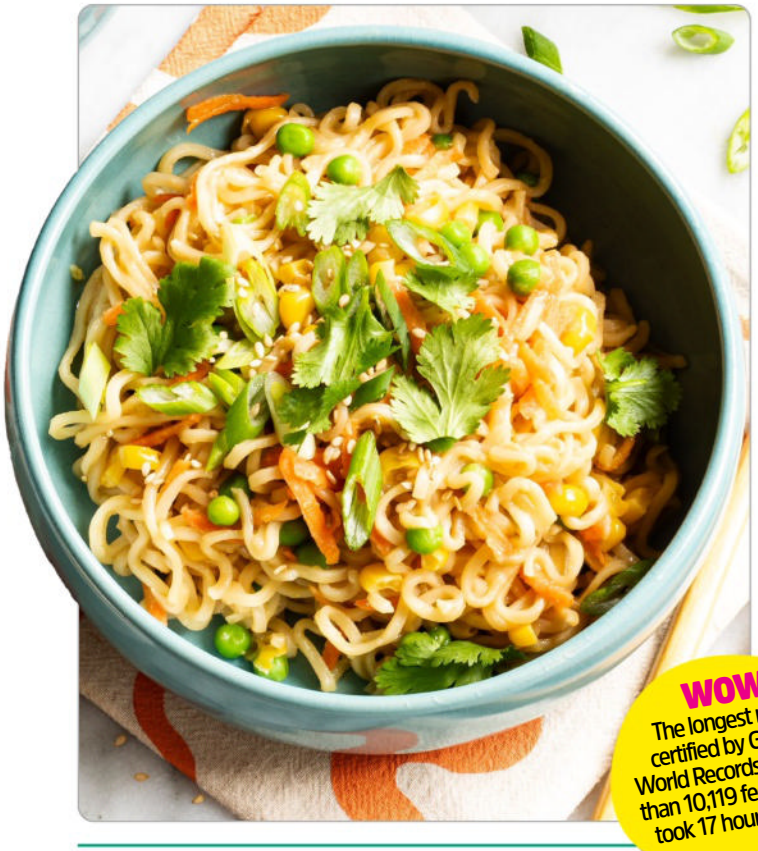
Ingredients

- 1 large navel orange, peeled and sectioned
- ¾ cup canned coconut milk
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 4 teaspoons maple syrup
- Orange slices, for serving

Instructions

1. Combine the orange sections, coconut milk, vanilla extract, and maple syrup with 1 cup of ice in a blender.
2. Blend until smooth.
3. Divide the drink evenly between 2 glasses, and garnish each with an orange slice. Drink immediately. Makes 2 servings.

WARNING! Ask an adult's permission before using a knife, oven, stove, mixer, or blender.



MISO BUTTER RAMEN NOODLES

Ingredients

- 2 (3.5-ounce) packages uncooked ramen noodles, seasoning discarded
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 clove garlic, grated
- 1-inch knob fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 2 tablespoons miso paste
- ½ cup frozen peas, thawed
- ½ cup frozen corn, thawed
- 1 large carrot, peeled and shredded
- 2 scallions, sliced (for garnish)
- Cilantro leaves (for garnish)
- Sesame seeds (for garnish)

Instructions

1. Bring 4 cups of water to a boil. Add the ramen noodles and cook for 2 minutes. Drain, reserving 1 cup of the noodle water.
2. Melt butter in a large skillet. Add the grated garlic and ginger and cook for 1 minute.
3. Add the miso paste and ½ cup noodle water and continue to cook until the miso is dissolved and the sauce has slightly thickened, for about 3 minutes.
4. Add the ramen noodles, peas, corn, and carrots and cook until heated through, about 2 minutes more. If the mixture becomes too sticky, you can add more noodle water, about 1 tablespoon at a time, to loosen.
5. Divide the cooked ramen noodles evenly among four bowls and top each with scallions, cilantro, and sesame seeds. Serve immediately. Makes 4 servings.

WOW! The longest noodle certified by Guinness World Records was more than 10,119 feet long and took 17 hours to make.

JOY HOWARD; ON RIGHT PAGE: ERICA CLARK FOR STONE KITCHEN CREATIVE

PIZZA DIP WITH GARLIC KNOTS

A SLICE OF HISTORY
The oldest pizzeria in the world, Antica Pizzeria Port'Alba, in Naples, Italy, started as a pizza stand in 1738.

Ingredients

Pizza dip

- 8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1½ cups shredded mozzarella
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 cup pizza sauce (from a can or jar)
- Mini pepperoni (optional)
- Fresh basil (optional)

Garlic knots

- One 13.8-ounce package refrigerated pizza dough (such as Pillsbury brand)
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

Instructions

1. Pizza dip: Preheat oven to 425˚ F. Using a stand mixer if you have one (or a spoon), mix the cream cheese, 1 cup of the mozzarella cheese, ½ cup of the Parmesan cheese, and the Italian seasoning until well combined. Spread the mixture into a small baking dish or an oven-safe skillet.
2. Spoon pizza sauce over the cheese mixture, then top with ½ cup each of shredded mozzarella and Parmesan. Top with pepperoni slices, if desired.
3. Bake the pizza dip until the cheese is melted and bubbly, about 20 minutes. (Also prepare garlic knots to bake alongside the dip.)
4. Remove skillet from the oven and top with fresh basil leaves, if desired.
5. Garlic knots: Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Unroll dough and slice into 16 strips (6"x1" in size). Tie each in a knot and place on sheet. Bake 15 minutes or until puffed and golden.
6. While the knots bake, melt the butter in a small pot over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and turn heat down to low. Stir continuously for 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in salt and ground pepper, if desired.
7. With a pastry brush or a teaspoon, cover warm dough knots with the garlic butter. Sprinkle with Parmesan and minced basil, if desired. Dip garlic knots into the pizza dip and enjoy. Serves 8.

SNICKERDOODLE BLONDIES

Ingredients

- 12 tablespoons (1.5 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg, plus 1 egg yolk, at room temperature
- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1½ teaspoons cream of tartar
- ½ teaspoon fine salt

For the topping

- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 4 teaspoons granulated sugar

Instructions

1. Heat oven to 325° F and generously grease the bottom and inner sides of an 8-by-8-inch baking pan.
2. Using an electric mixer, cream the butter and sugars until light and fluffy. Add the egg and egg yolk and mix until thoroughly combined. Mix in the sour cream and vanilla. Stop to scrape down sides of the bowl as necessary.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the flour, baking powder, cream of tartar, and salt. Add the dry ingredients to the other bowl slowly, mixing until just combined. Using a spatula, spread batter into the prepared pan.
4. Prepare the topping: In a small bowl, mix together the cinnamon and granulated sugar. Sprinkle mixture evenly over the top.
5. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until blondies are set. Let cool completely before slicing. Makes 16 blondies.

Create fantastic crafts

These are the projects kids said they most enjoyed making this year.

PAINTED PAPER BOOKMARK

What you need

- Kraft paper or newspaper
- Heavy paper, like cardstock or watercolor paper
- Masking tape
- Acrylic craft paint
- Paint scraper, putty knife, or an old credit card
- Scissors
- Hole punch and ribbon (optional)

Instructions

1. Cover a table with kraft paper or newspaper to protect it. Tape your cardstock or watercolor paper to the kraft paper or newspaper to keep it steady while you paint.
2. Squeeze blobs of paint onto cardstock or watercolor paper.
3. Hold your paint scraper at the top of the paper, with the edge of it resting on the paper. Push scraper over the paint to move it around. You can pull the scraper in straight or curvy lines, squiggles, circles, or an arc, like a rainbow.
4. After your design dries, you can add more blobs of paint if you wish. Continue scraping paint around to layer shapes, or criss-cross stripes for a plaid pattern.
5. After your artwork is dry, cut it in strips to make bookmarks. You can punch a hole at the center top

PENCIL CUPS MADE FROM RECYCLED CANS

What you need

- Recycled cans, cleaned out
- Scrap corrugated cardboard, such as from a shipping box
- Scissors
- Glue (ideally hot glue for a stronger bond, or white glue)
- Primer to create brighter colors (optional)
- Paintbrush
- Acrylic craft paint

Instructions

1. To make an animal head, cut a thin semi-circle from the cardboard. To cut the corrugated cardboard and make it easier to bend, cut the pieces so the lines inside the cardboard go up and down, not side to side. Cut as many heads as the number of cans you have.
2. With an adult's supervision, glue the heads onto the top of the cans. Allow the glue to set or dry.
3. Cut out cardboard ears, snouts, and arms. Glue the shapes to the cans and allow the glue to set or dry.
4. Paint the animals. Start with a main color, let it dry, and then add details like spots, eyes, and noses.

DID YOU KNOW?
A single pencil can be used to write up to 45,000 words.

JODI LEVINE FOR SUPERMAKEIT

FELT NAME BANNER

What you need

- Ruler, pencil, and paper
- Sharp scissors
- Felt
- Letter printouts
- Tape
- Paintbrush
- Fabric glue or tacky white glue
- String
- Big-eye needle or hole punch

Instructions

1. Use the ruler, pencil, and paper to make a template (pattern) for your felt flags. It can be a flag in the shape of a swallowtail (shown above) or a triangle, rectangle, or other shape of your choice. To make a symmetrical shape, fold the paper in half. Draw half of the shape with its center along the fold. Cut it out.
2. Trace your flag template onto the felt, then cut out the shape. Repeat this step to make as many flags as there are letters in your name (or the name of the person you're making it for).
3. Print out the letters in a simple sans serif typeface (such as Arial) in a size that will fit nicely on your flags. Cut out each letter, leaving some extra white space around it. Tape each letter to a piece of felt in any color you would like your letters to be.
4. With the scissors and an adult's help, carefully trim out each letter, cutting through the paper and felt at the same time. It's helpful to have at least two parts of the letter taped to the felt while you cut so it doesn't shift around. You can add tape as you go. For letters with a space in the center, like the letter O, carefully poke a hole in the letter with one blade of the scissors, then cut your way around.
5. With the paintbrush, paint a thin layer of glue onto the back of a letter and center it onto the flag. Repeat this step with the rest of your letters and flags.
6. Determine the length of your banner. Lay your flags on the table, evenly spaced apart. Measure this length and add a few feet to both ends to allow for hanging the banner. Cut a piece of string to this length.
7. Punch or poke a hole in the top corners of each flag, then string the flags together. Hang it up with an adult's help.

SUPER-CREATIVE SNEAKERS

What you need

- Canvas sneakers
- Pencil
- White eraser
- Water-based acrylic paint pens, like Posca (Note: Permanent markers might bleed.)
- Optional: tissue paper or newspaper

FUN FACT
Sneakers got their name in the 1880s from their quiet rubber soles, which allowed wearers to "sneak" up on others.

Instructions

1. For this project you will be decorating a pair of sneakers. Ask a parent for permission first.
2. Decide on a design. You can choose a theme (like music, food, or dogs, as shown) or draw a mix of things.
3. Pick a palette. You could use all the colors in the rainbow or stick to a simple black-and-white scheme. You could also choose a limited palette of two or three colors. Black and yellow were used for the dog sneaker shown at left, for example.
4. If you want a firm surface for drawing, stuff sneakers with tissue paper or newspaper.
5. Optional: You can lightly sketch a design in pencil first. Use a white eraser to make corrections. Wipe off the eraser dust completely before you paint.
6. Use the paint pens to make doodles. To keep the colors clean and bright, start with lighter colors and let them dry.
7. Layer on the darker colors, such as black outlines, last. Allow them to dry, and enjoy!

My 2024 memories

Name Age Grade

What is your favorite memory from 2024?

What are you most proud of when you think back on 2024?

What is something that surprised you about 2024?

Who are the people you spent time with in 2024?

What will you remember most about the year 2024?

GETTY IMAGES

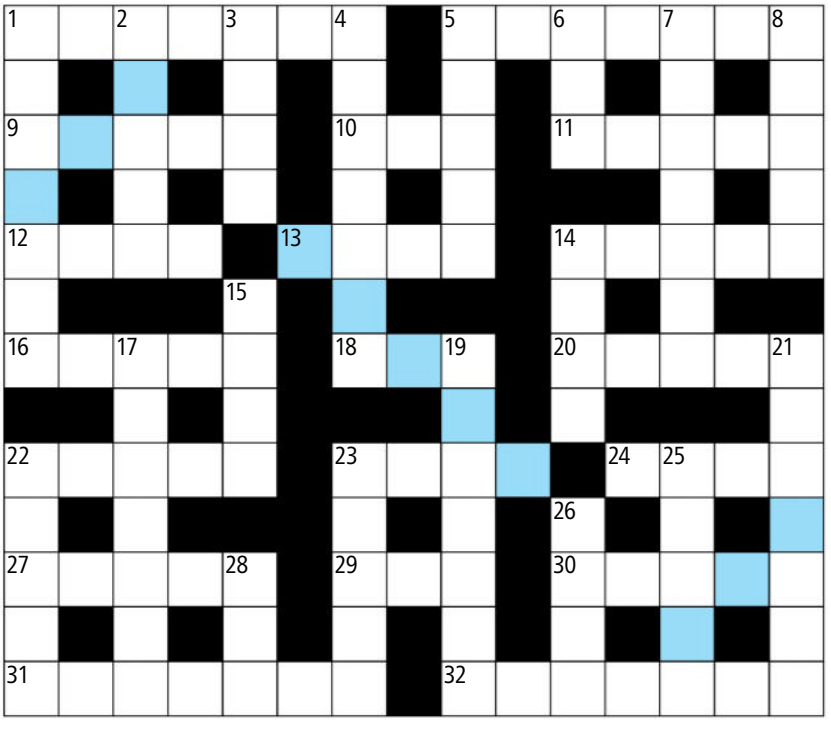
Draw a picture of yourself doing something memorable in 2024, or attach photos from the year that are meaningful to you.

Test your puzzle power!

Winter keyword crossword

Once you have completed the crossword, the letters in the blue boxes, read in order from left to right, will spell out the answer to the winter keyword question.

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 37.



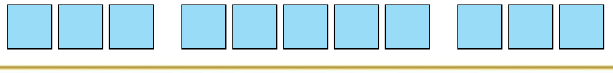
ACROSS

1 Kind of scarf or part of a car that keeps the engine from being too noisy
5 Cozy bed covering
9 Slowly turns from ice to water
10 Item for carrying groceries
11 The jacket over the pullover over the thermal underwear, for example
12 Has dinner
13 Bottom of the foot or bottom of a shoe
14 Turned from water to ice
16 What a person practicing on a bunny slope hopes to become
18 Message that indicates a ship needs help quickly
20 Conk out for the night
22 Warm bed covering often made by stitching together different pieces of fabric
23 Follow a command
24 Trade one thing for another
27 Rounded shelter traditionally built by Inuit people
29 Instruction commonly spoken to a dog
30 Word that might come before bear or opposites
31 Items seen on rugs and graduation caps
32 Steals something and then demands money for its return

DOWN

1 Hand coverings where your four fingers share one space
2 Sumptuous meal with many courses
3 Didn't win
4 They are tied into bows on gift-wrapped presents
5 Simple brass instrument played in the military
6 "___ things being equal..."
7 In a detective story, the investigator might peer through this
8 Number of little pigs, musketeers, or blind mice
14 Like a speed skater
15 A medium-quick pace for a horse
17 These may hang from a roof in winter
19 Pullover knitted garment
21 Paper-like material that ancient Egyptians wrote on
22 Adjective often used to describe a mouse
23 Lush green area in a desert
25 Where's ___? (popular series of observation books)
26 Twirl around like an ice skater
28 Top position in a list, like the answer to our keyword question

Winter keyword question: What wintry book has been checked out of the New York Public Library more than any other book?



PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

DETAILS, DETAILS

Six pieces have been removed from this photo of flannel shirts. Can you match the circular details under the photo with the numbered sections they came from?

A B C D E F

JUGGLING ACT

Use the letters K, S, and I in any order to complete each four-letter word.

K	S	I	
R			
		S	
			P
		N	
S			
		D	

OVERLAPS

For each word pair, answer each of the two clues by completing the word in the boxes below or above it. When you're done, find the hidden word that has been formed across the spot where each pair of words is joined. The three hidden words will all have something in common.

Grouchy Muppet

Distant

Once ___ a time

Household task

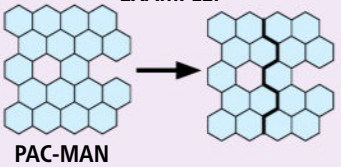
Chicken drumstick

Cozy couch for two people

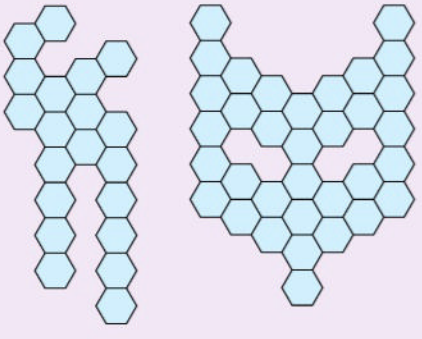
Divide the shapes

Divide each figure into two identical pieces, as in the example. The pieces will not need to be rotated.

EXAMPLE:



PAC-MAN

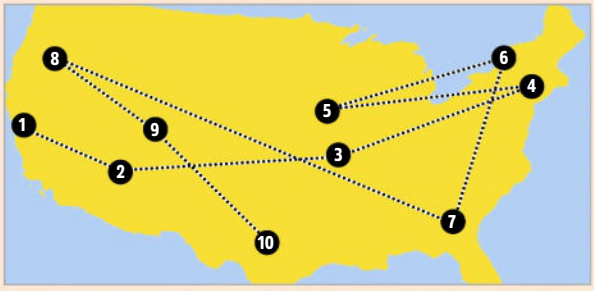


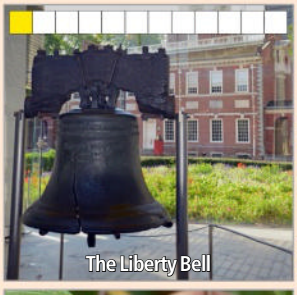
WRENCH FOX

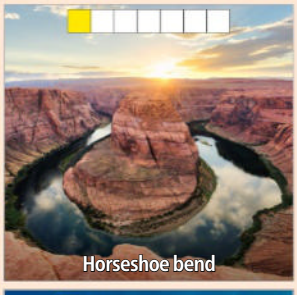
GETTY IMAGES

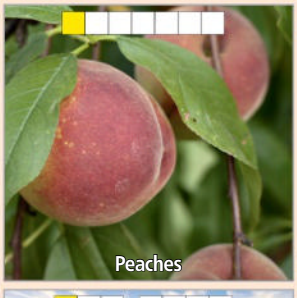
Road trip

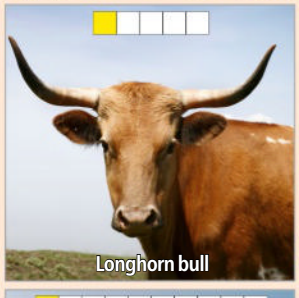
The route below shows 10 places where pictures were taken. Identify the state shown in each, then arrange their first letters in the order of the trip's stops to answer the bonus question.

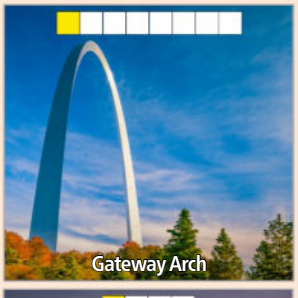


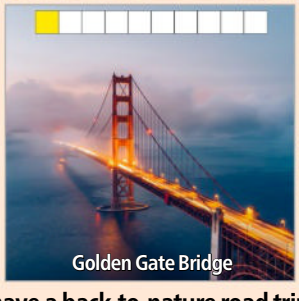


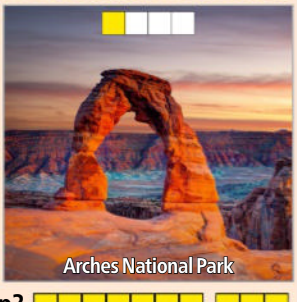










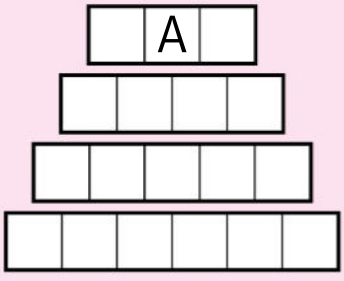


Bonus: What's a fun way to have a back-to-nature road trip?

Add-ons

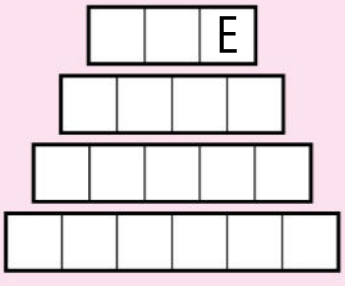
First, answer as many of the clues as you can. Then place each answer word into one of the stacks so each word in the stack gains one letter without rearranging the others. The added letter can go anywhere in the word. One letter is given in each stack to help get you started.

1



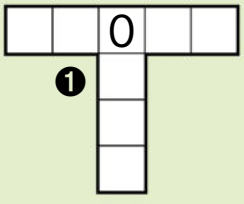
- Word after sour and shaving
- Grand home for royalty
- Push a lot of stuff inside
- Speed a runner maintains
- Loud shriek
- "There's no ___ like home"
- Male sheep
- Top card in a deck

2

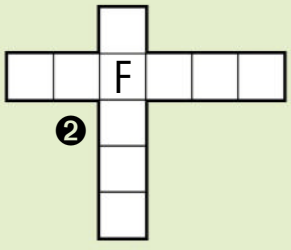


OPPOSITE PAIRS

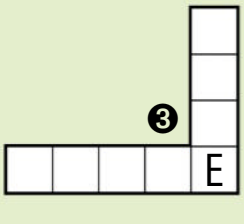
Use the letters given beneath each grid to fill in two words that are opposites, like GIVE and TAKE. The letter where the words cross is given.



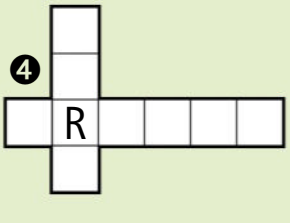
CEELNPS



ABEEEORRT



AFLRSTU



BEEEFNUZ

Chilly penguin word search

Can you find all these words associated with penguins in the grid? They are hidden horizontally, vertically, or diagonally and can be forward or backward. When you're done, read the remaining letters to get a bonus message.

ADELIE
ANTARCTICA
BEAK
BELLY
BLUBBER
BUOYANT
CALLS
CHICK
CHINSTRAP
COASTAL
COLD
COLONY
CURIOUS
DIVE
EGGS
EMPEROR
ENDANGERED
FISH
FLIGHTLESS
GAIT
GENTOO
GLACIER
HATCH
HUDDLE
HUMBOLDT
ICE SHELF
KRILL
MACARONI
NEST
OCEAN
PAIRS
PINGU
PLAY
SNOW
TAIL
TOBOGGANING
TRAVEL
TUXEDO
UPRIGHT
WADDLE
WEBBED FEET
WINGS

```
          P L M
        A I I L E
E M A C A R O N I M
    P T E R E O G B R
      P S E B U U N
      T D L O B M U H
        G Y U K U I F
        A H N C O L D S
      N P S R I E O B T
    T F L I G H T L E S S
    E E T F S C E C L T S
  E G H G E C R E I C A L G
G S G F C R A O F G A I T W N
K M I S I D E L D D U H F O S Y I
R O R E P M E R L C E I G N B N A I W
D P I C O R L S H B D S B O Y O B
U L L B E A K I B A L L G A C
  E L G H N N E C O I G N
  G V N T A S W C P H A E
  M A C I T C R A T N A
  O D R N R C T I H I E
    N I T A R H R F N
    E E E P T I S T G
      L S U O I R U C
        D N C A B X
        A D E L I E P
        I W A A R D L M
      V P O N W   O A L U
      G E N T O O   Y C Y H
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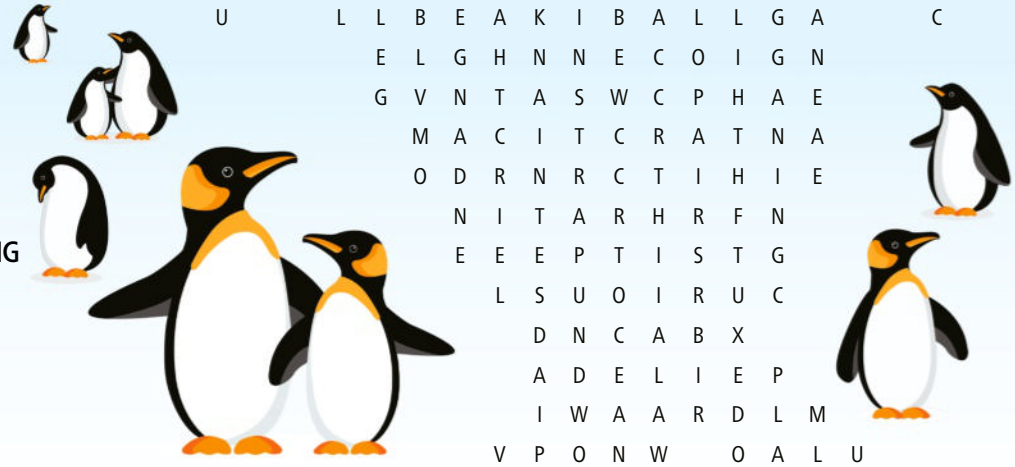


Spot the difference

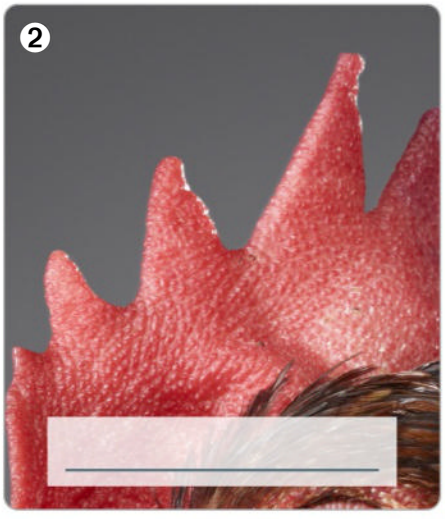
These two photographs showing children building a snowman appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

GETTY IMAGES

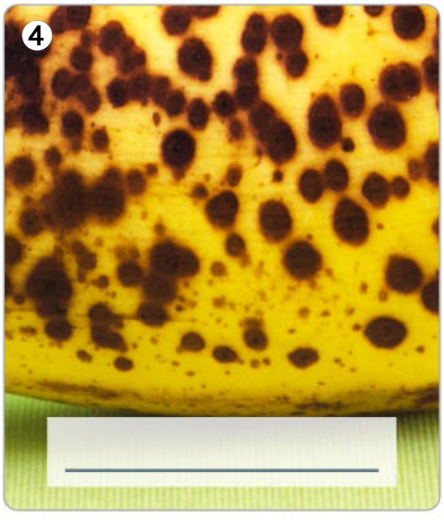
Up close

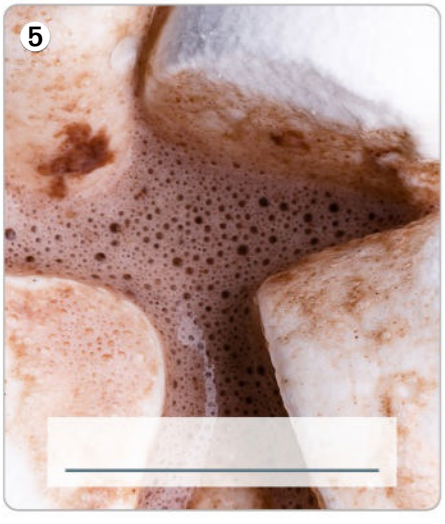
Each of these photos is an extreme close-up of something familiar. Can you recognize each one?

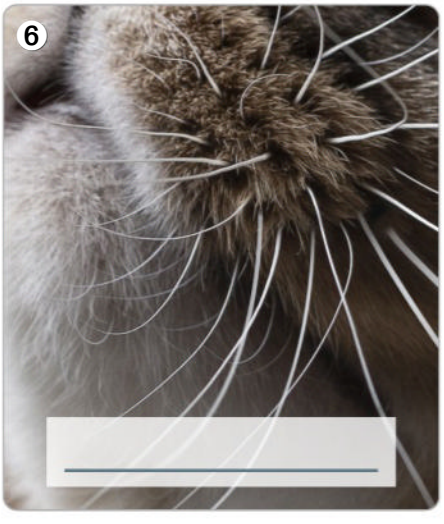
1

2 

3

4 

5 

6 

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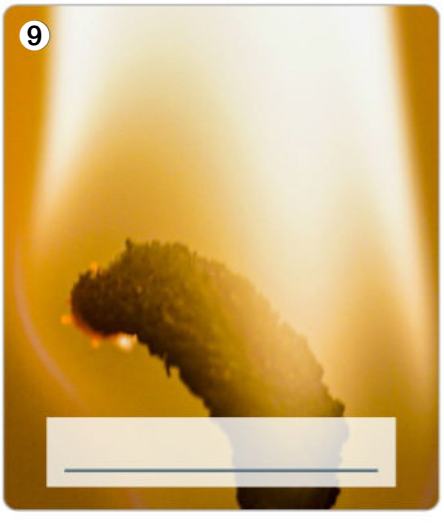
9 

Super snowfall word ladder

To change the word SNOW into the word FALL, use each clue to fill in a word that is only one letter different from the word before it. Three shaded answer words don't have clues. Use the answers before and after those words to find words that can fit in those boxes to continue the chain. The correct three words will reveal something you see people do after a snowfall. If you get stuck, try solving from the bottom up.

	S N O W
Adjective for describing snails ▶	
Killed a mythical beast (Harry Potter ___ the basilisk) ▶	
What you plant to grow a plant ▶	
Catches sight of ▶	
Uses a needle and thread ▶	
Items in a carpenter's toolbox ▶	
Government rules and regulations ▶	
Surface that might be blanketed after a snowfall ▶	
Sunrise ▶	
Place large enough to have its own zip code ▶	
Relocates a broken-down car ▶	
A whole lot ▶	
Metal containers for cookies ▶	
Slight coloration ▶	
Helpful puzzle-solving suggestion ▶	
Handle of a sword ▶	
Definitely intend to ▶	
There's one in China that's 13,000 miles long ▶	
	F A L L

GETTY IMAGES

Find the match

Can you tell which two of these pictures of a skiing polar bear are the same?

MEGA CROSSMATH

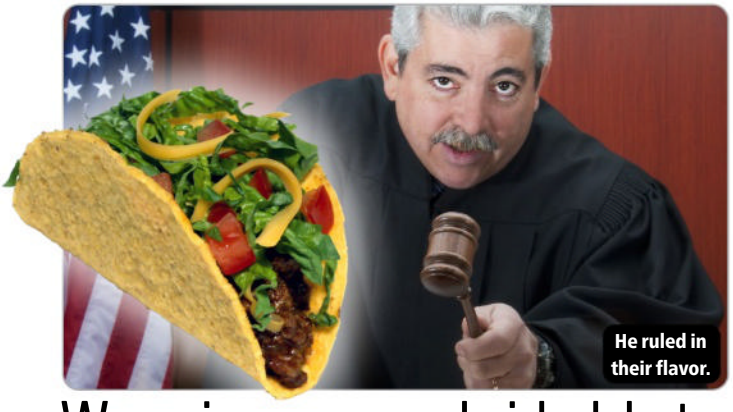
Fill each empty box with a number or a mathematical symbol (+, –, ×, or ÷) to complete the equations across and down. A symbol can be used more than once. (NEED A HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)

48	÷		=			21
2	+	6			=	
=		=		=		=
	+		=	24		10

Mega crossmath hint: Start by solving the column at far right.

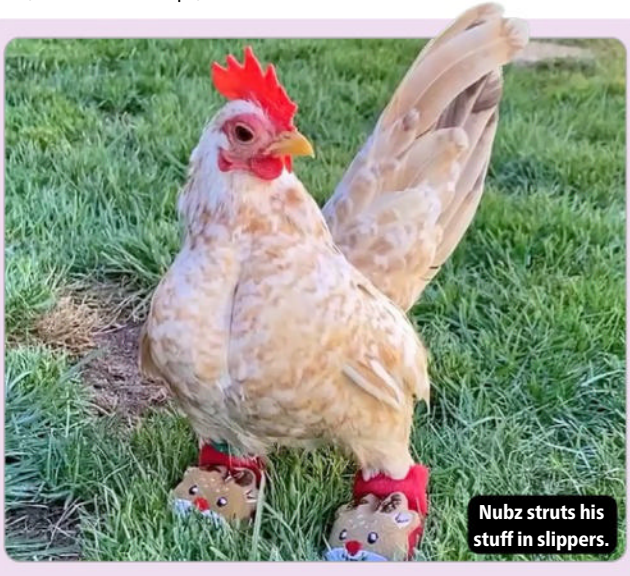
Wild and wacky tales

These eight stories from 2024 left us laughing in amazement. Is the last one real or fake?


He ruled in their flavor.

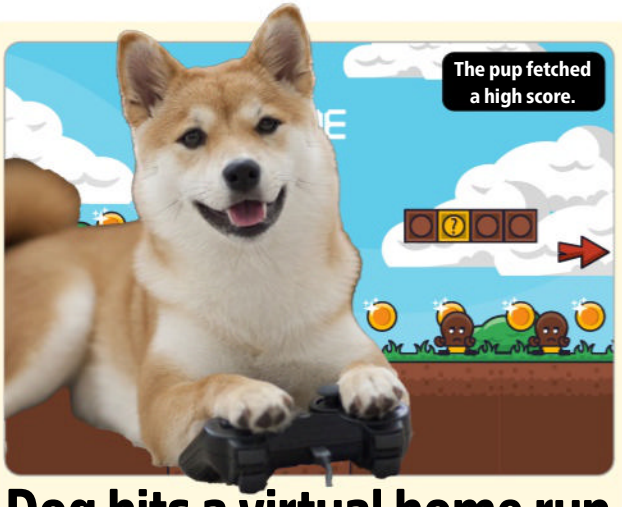
Wrapping up a sandwich debate

An age-old controversy went to court: Are tacos sandwiches? Judge Craig Bobay of Allen County, Indiana, weighed in to settle a local legal dispute. The case involved a shopping center where fast-food restaurants are banned but serving "made to order" sandwiches is allowed. Bobay ruled that a Famous Taco eatery could open there because tacos and burritos are "Mexican-style sandwiches." He said the definition of sandwich can also include "Greek gyros, Indian naan wraps, or Vietnamese bánh mì."


Nubz struts his stuff in slippers.

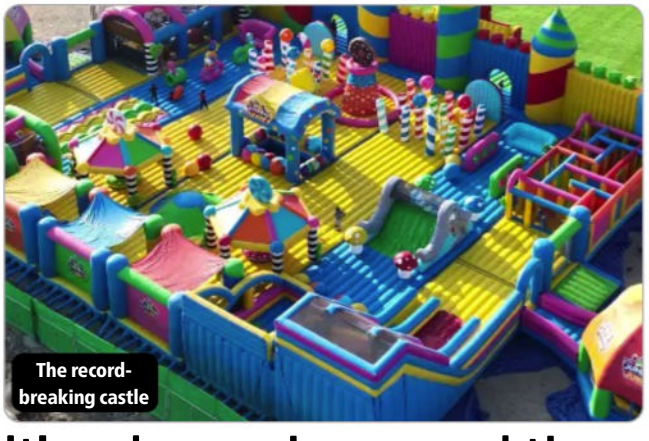
The chicken that walks in style

This year, Nubz the chicken had the coolest kicks in town. Nubz had lost most of his toes due to a mite infestation and had trouble walking on rough dirt, so owner Meesh Davignon fitted him with miniature slippers. After she posted a video of Nubz's new footwear, people sent him more than 60 pairs of tiny shoes. "They've been a great blessing" for the "sassy, sweet" bird, Davignon said.


The pup fetched a high score.

Dog hits a virtual home run

James Stephens realized his Shiba Inu, Peanut Butter, was special. Peanut Butter was so good at following commands that he even learned to use a custom video-game controller. This summer, a charity event put Peanut Butter's prowess to the test. As hundreds of fans chanted "Who's a good boy?" the pup sped through a baseball video game, winning with a home run in the 12th inning. Stephens said, "It was the greatest moment of my life."


The record-breaking castle

It's a bouncing good time

The bouncy fun seems endless at a tourist attraction in Pakistan, which has claimed the Guinness World Records title for the world's biggest inflatable castle. The Jumbo Jump in the city of Karachi measures more than 15,200 square feet in area and stands 40 feet tall. As many as 200 people can fit into Jumbo Jump's bouncy castle, which has climbing walls and a slide. It took six months to build and 10 minutes to inflate. Its founder, Safeer Khan, called it "a celebration of the extraordinary."

Asparagus + ice cream = a sweet surprise

A most unusual frozen flavor

A frozen treat served in Massachusetts may not be for everyone. "Hadley Grass" ice cream, named for a town known as the "asparagus capital of the world," features the taste of asparagus. A local ice cream shop has been making the flavor each spring for about 20 years. They use cooked asparagus spears, almonds, and a flavoring blend that is intended to complement the vegetable's taste. One reviewer described the light green dessert as having a "mellow, nutty, savory-sweet flavor" with "brighter notes" from the asparagus.

The sky-high salon treatment

Hanging around for a haircut

Samuel Volery loves the mountains and dislikes going to the barber. So he asked his friend Julia Schuy to cut his hair while he hung upside down from a highline, which is similar to a tightrope, over the Swiss Alps mountain range. While also hanging upside down, Schuy chopped at his long locks and tossed the hair into the wind. Volery explained that he wanted to go into nature and have an adventure instead of spending a boring hour in a barber's chair.

Call him Rat-a-tidy!

The mysterious nighttime cleaner

Rodney Holbrook could not figure out who was tidying up his shed. For months, items he left out each night were placed neatly in a box by morning. Holbrook eventually set up cameras in the shed and saw a small mouse carrying objects such as nails, clothespins, cups, and a screwdriver to the box. Experts think the diligent rodent might have been building a nest or hiding a stash of nuts. "I don't bother to tidy up now, as I know he will see to it," Holbrook told CNN.

Aliens are invited to visit

The tourism board of Lexington, Kentucky, thought outside the solar system in a campaign to attract visitors. They beamed a message—including an audio recording by a blues musician, photos of city sights, and the message, "Visit Lexington, Kentucky"—into space. The appeal was not just a shot in the dark: It was targeted to a star system 40 light-years away with Earth-sized planets. It is expected to arrive there in about 38 years. Is this true, or is it too far-out to believe?*

*Real! "We believe Lexington is the best place on Earth," the board president said. "It's the ideal location for extraterrestrial travelers to begin exploring our world." No alien spaceships have arrived so far, but visits to the city's website rose by more than 50%.

GETTY IMAGES (3); CATERS; ANIMAL NEWS AGENCY; SHUTTERSTOCK; VISITLEX (2); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (4); MICHELLE DAVIGNON; GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

Editor's note

As we were working on this issue, our company held its annual awards ceremony. *The Week Junior* was nominated for Magazine of the Year, and we won! When accepting the award, I thanked all the talented people who work on the magazine. I also thanked you, our readers across the US. After all, you are the inspiration for everything we do!

The award was a wonderful way to wrap up an exciting 2024. So is this issue, which is a look back at the year's most significant, surprising, and spectacular stories in all the subject areas you love—from national and international news (p2–5) to animals and science (p8–11) to sports and arts (p14–17). This issue also includes our picks for the people (p6), photos (p12), games (p18), and books (p19) of the year—plus the wacky tales that made us laugh the hardest (p32).

You'll also find bonus sections of recipes (p20), crafts (p22), and puzzles (p26)—our gifts to you!

As you're reflecting on the past year, we invite you to fill out the keepsake form we've created for you (p24). We also hope you will turn to our back page and consider which cover of *The Week Junior* from 2024 was your favorite. Your opinion can be emailed to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

Our offices will be closed for the next two weeks, and we will return in January to bring you Issue 247. Until then, thank you for reading *The Week Junior* and being part of our community of curious and caring children. From all of us in the photo below to you and your families, happy new year!

Andrea Barbalich
Editor-in-Chief

The staff of *The Week Junior* wishes you an amazing new year!

COURTESY THE WEEK JUNIOR READERS

Your year in photos

We received so many fantastic photos from our readers in 2024. Thank you for sharing them with us! You told us about the many ways you are being kind to others. You showed us the recipes and crafts you made from our How To section. You visited amazing places, often taking *The Week Junior* with you. And you wrote to us about your favorite books! As a fun look back, here are some of the reader photos we published this year. We can't wait to see what you send us in 2025! Your photos and stories can be sent to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

YOU FOUND WAYS TO HELP OTHERS!

THE WEEK Junior IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

YOU MADE FUN RECIPES AND CRAFTS!

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

YOU VISITED EXCITING PLACES!

YOU SHARED YOUR LOVE OF READING!

COURTESY THE WEEK JUNIOR READERS

Puzzle and quiz answers

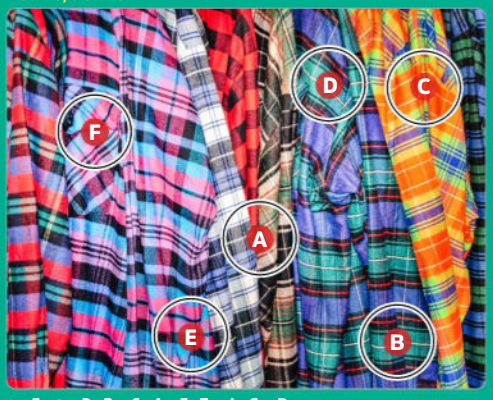
Test your puzzle power! (pages 26–31)

Winter keyword crossword

M	U	F	F	L	E	R	■	B	L	A	N	K	E	T
I	■	E	■	O	■	I	■	U	■	L	■	E	■	H
T	H	A	W	S	■	B	A	G	■	L	A	Y	E	R
T	■	S	■	T	■	B	■	L	■	■	■	H	■	E
E	A	T	S	■	S	O	L	E	■	F	R	O	Z	E
N	■	■	■	T	■	N	■	■	■	A	■	L	■	■
S	K	I	E	R	■	S	O	S	■	S	L	E	E	P
■	■	C	■	O	■	■	■	W	■	T	■	■	■	A
Q	U	I	L	T	■	O	B	E	Y	■	S	W	A	P
U	■	C	■	■	■	A	■	A	■	S	■	A	■	Y
I	G	L	O	O	■	S	I	T	■	P	O	L	A	R
E	■	E	■	N	■	I	■	E	■	I	■	D	■	U
T	A	S	S	E	L	S	■	R	A	N	S	O	M	S

Winter keyword answer: *The Snowy Day*

Details, details

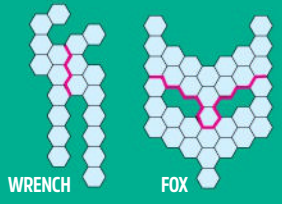


1 = F; **2** = D; **3** = C; **4** = E; **5** = A; **6** = B

Super snowfall word ladder

SNOW
slow
slew
SLED
seed
sees
sews
saws
laws
lawn
dawn
DOWN
town
tows
tons
tins
tint
hint
hilt
HILL
will
wall
FALL

Divide the shapes



Overlaps

The hidden answers are all warm clothes:

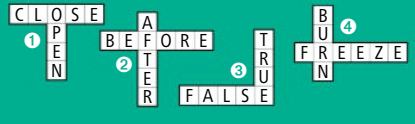
scarf (oSCAR/Far)

poncho (uPON/CHOre)

gloves (leG/LOVESeat)

Spot the difference

Opposite pairs



Add-ons

1	2
ram	ace
cram	pace
cream	place
scream	palace

Mega crossmath

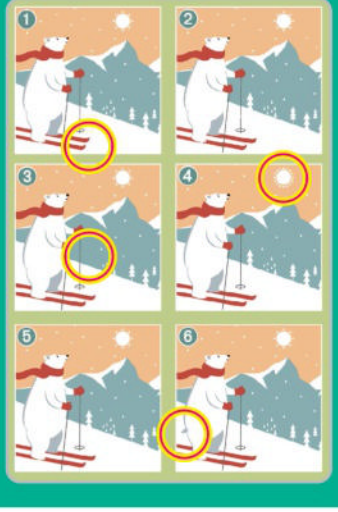
48	÷	6	=	8		21
÷		−		×		−
2	+	6	+	3	=	11
=		=		=		=
24	+	0	=	24		10

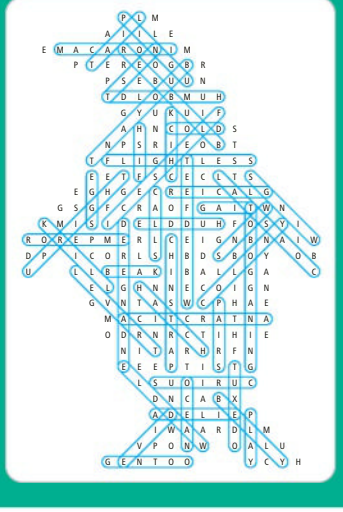
Juggling act

risk
kiss
skip
sink
skis
kids

Find the match

Numbers 2 and 5 are the same:





Chilly penguin word search

Unused letters: Male emperor penguins protect eggs from frigid cold by balancing them on their feet in a warm pouch.

Up close

1. Sunflower
2. Chicken's comb
3. Goldfish crackers
4. Banana peel
5. Marshmallows in cocoa
6. Cat's whiskers
7. Walnut in its shell
8. Everything bagel
9. Candle wick and flame

Road trip

1. **California** Golden Gate Bridge
2. **Arizona** Horseshoe bend
3. **Missouri** Gateway Arch
4. **Pennsylvania** The Liberty Bell
5. **Iowa** Corn fields
6. **New York** Niagara Falls
7. **Georgia** Peaches
8. **Oregon** Crater Lake
9. **Utah** Arches National Park
10. **Texas** Longhorn bull

Bonus answer: camping out

GETTY IMAGES

Quiz answers (from page 38)

1 a) Socks **2** False. A bear named 128 "Grazer" won. **3** b) Europa **4** *Inside Out 2* **5** True **6** *Cowboy Carter* **7** c) Tyrannosaurus rex **8** b) Hawaii **9** Moo Deng **10** True **11** b) PlayStation 5 **12** India **13** True **14** c) 126 **15** False. A judge ruled that tacos and burritos are sandwiches.

How much of this year's news can you remember?

1 The book *Magnolia Wu Unfolds It All* is about a girl who returns what articles of clothing to their owners?

a) Socks b) Shirts c) Pants

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

2 True or false? A bear named 32 "Chunk" won Katmai National Park's Fat Bear Week in 2024.

True ☐ False ☐

3 NASA launched a mission to look for signs of life on which of Jupiter's moons?

a) Callisto b) Europa c) Io

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

4 What film became the highest-grossing animated movie of all time this year?

5 True or false? In 2024, Tatyana McFadden became the most decorated American track and field athlete ever.

True ☐ False ☐

6 Beyoncé surprised fans this year by releasing a country album called what?

7 Boys hiking in North Dakota found a fossil of what kind of dinosaur?

a) Giganotosaurus b) Titanosaurus c) Tyrannosaurus rex

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

8 Young climate activists achieved a landmark legal settlement with what state in 2024?

a) California b) Hawaii c) New York

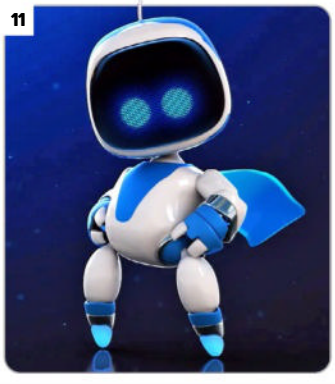
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

9

14

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 37.

3


11

6

9 What is the name of the young pygmy hippopotamus in Thailand who became an online sensation?

10 True or false? More people watched the NCAA women's basketball championship final this year than the men's.

True ☐ False ☐

11 The adventure game Astro Bot starts with characters traveling in a flying version of which video game console?

a) Nintendo Switch
b) PlayStation 5
c) Xbox Series X

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

12 The world's largest election was held this year in what country?

13 True or false? In 2024, China loaned the US four giant pandas as part of a conservation program known as "panda diplomacy."

True ☐ False ☐

14 How many medals did Team USA win at the Paris Olympics this summer?

a) 106
b) 120
c) 126

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

15 True or false? A judge in Indiana ruled that tacos and burritos are not considered sandwiches.

True ☐ False ☐

THE WEEK Junior

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The Week Junior (ISSN 2689-9027) is published weekly, except January 5, January 12, July 12, and September 13. *The Week Junior* is published by Future US LLC, 130 West 42nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10036.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTERS: Send change of address to *The Week Junior,* PO Box 37595, Boone, IA 50037-7595.

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Which cover from the past year is your favorite? We'd love to know! Tell us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*.